

RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR

# ウォルテニア 戦記



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# **RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR**

— Wortenia Senki —

## **- VOLUME 4 - Zalda Kingdom War (I)**

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**[ Hasutsuki ]**

「入れ」

その声と同時に  
デイルフイーナが扉を開ける。

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「始め！」

「馬鹿め、わざわざ分散するとは  
勝負を捨てたな」  
騎士の一人が馬鹿にした様に  
鼻を鳴らして呟いた。



「亮真様……」

心配そうな視線を向ける  
サーラの頭に軽く手を置き、  
亮真は笑みを浮かべた。

「大丈夫だ」

RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR

# ウォルテニア 戦記

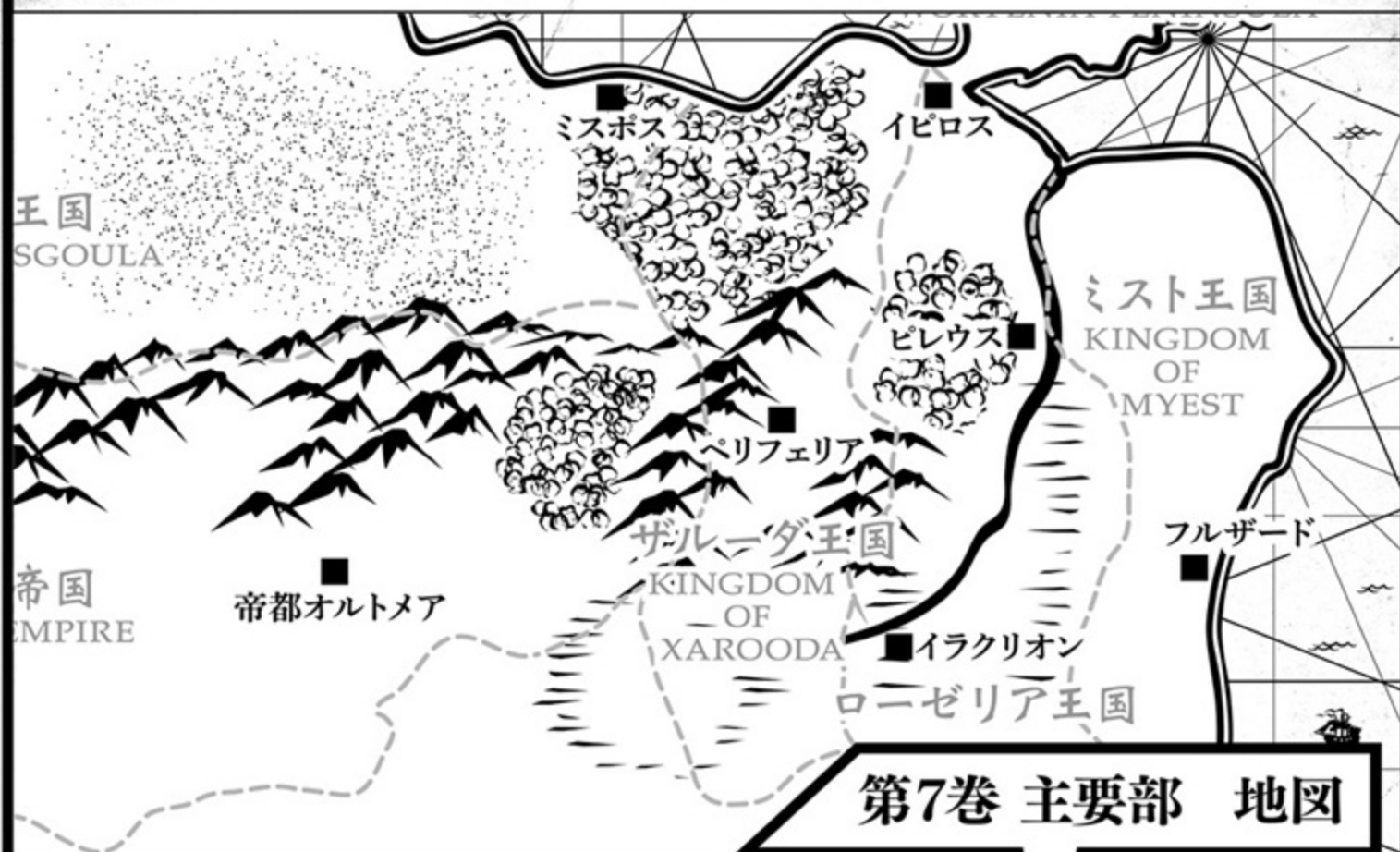


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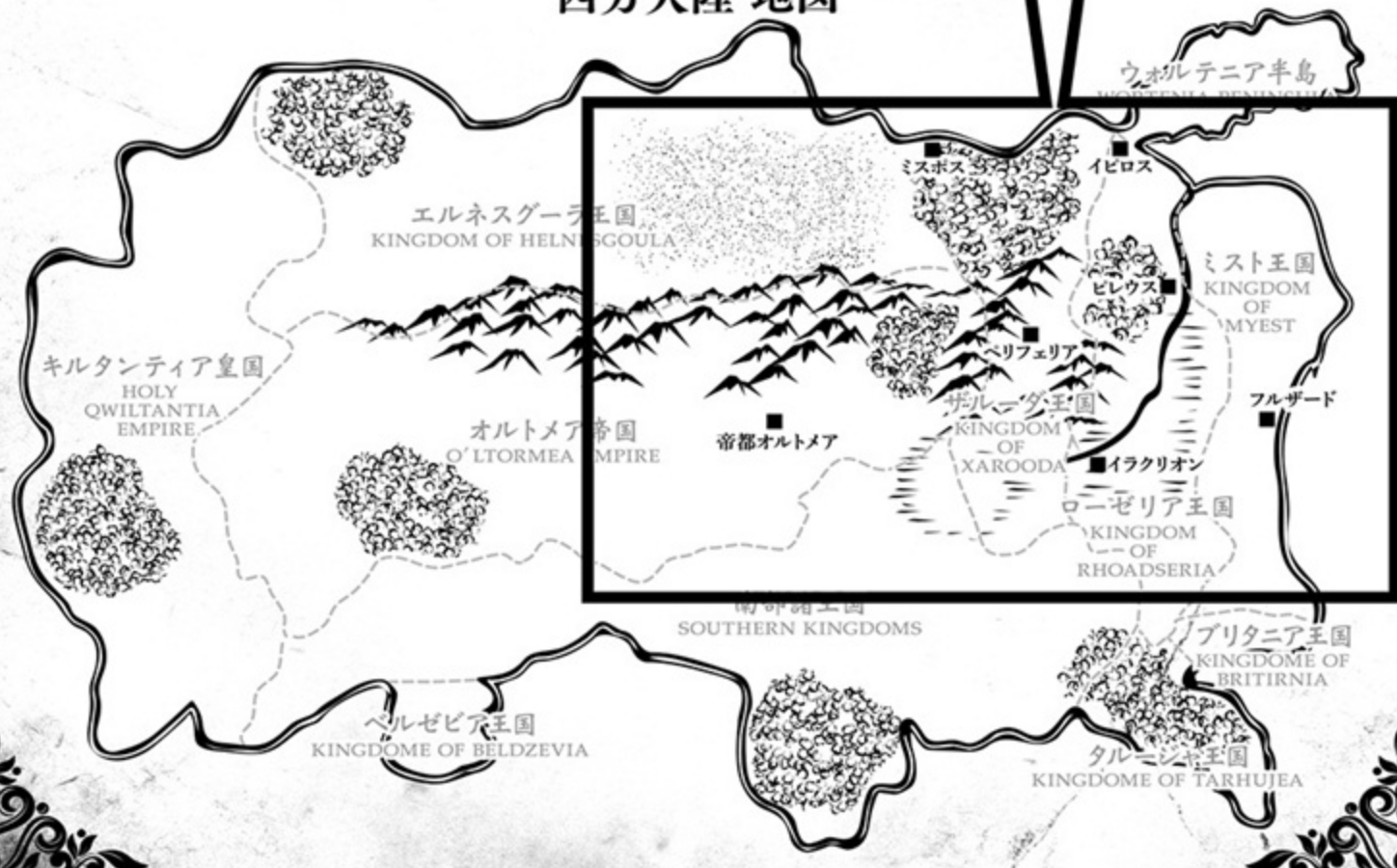
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# WORLD MAP of 《RECORD OF WORTENIA WAR》



## 西方大陸 地図



# Chapter 1

## Creeping Shadow of War 1

*Noon, Day 6th, 10th Month, the Year 2813, Western continent calendar.*

A galleon ship named Atalanta was running at full speed towards the northeast.

The ship was receiving a favorable wind direction.

In fact, its sail was greatly swelled out due to the strength of the wind.

“Report! Sirius harbor already appeared on the northeast.”

Land began appearing on the horizon.

“Understood. I will call captain Braz now.”

The moment the lookout crew shouts out loudly, the crew underneath him goes inside the ship.

“Uhuh, indeed that is the city of Sirius. Oi! We're already close, prepare the anchor!”

After checking the port using the telescope he had, the captain with black skins gives his order to his crew.

(On top of not waiting for the wind to blow, we actually ended up with a constant favorable wind huh?...)

Braz thought of such feeling while he folded his telescope.

He had left Mispoz city by the end of the 9th Month, they had calculated that they would arrive at Sirius city in 4 days.

But unlike his last route, He had chosen the route that did not navigate close to the coastal line, it was a route that goes straight across the ocean, but despite that, he managed to arrive earlier.

(I was wondering about what would happen but, listening to the young one suggestion seems to be the correct answer... I thought they were an amateur, but, I guess I lost this time huh?...)

A bitter smile appeared on Braz's face.

While the young one showed a certain respect toward Braz who was a senior and a veteran sailor, the youngster actually had the guts to order the shipping route in order to shorten the voyage time.

Normally they would need seven days for the trip, that includes the waiting for a good wind to appear, for them to arrive within five days were already doubtful.

Braz turned his gaze toward the group.

At the time when they headed toward Mispoz from Serius city, all of these youngsters had become seasick and ended up useless during the trip, but this time was different.

All of the youngsters were actually very young. Their ages were around 15 years old or even less.

Furthermore, they were not sailors.

They dressed in black leather armor, they were soldiers belonged to Baron Mikoshiba.

Although they were amateur sailors just a few days back, now their skill was not less than skilled sailors.

“Captain Braz, how is the wind? Should we strengthen the sail a bit more?”

Noticed Braz gaze.

A girl from the youngsters' group talked.

“No, if we strengthen it more than this, there's the possibility that the sail would break. Besides, our destination is already this close. No need to be in hurry. Thank you

Melissa-dono.”

Braz answered Melissa with polite words despite her being the same age as his daughter.

“Understood. If that the case then we will maintain the current speed.”

Braz showed a gentle smile toward Melissa who responded to him with such a bright smile.

Just like how he usually responded to his own daughter...

In this world, the ship that usually being used was a sailing ship or a Galley ship.

Both had different advantages, but Galleon ship was usually used for trade and transport because it had a large load capacity.

The biggest drawback of a Galleon ship was the needed wind strength to pull the ship.

Most ships including Galleon ship were using several sails to go forward.

Although fortunately in addition to the square sail, there was also development in regard to a vertical sail, but once the wind stops, ordinary sail ships have no choice but to wait for the wind to blow once again while being swayed by the wave. -

It is impossible for a human to control the weather, so the only thing the humans can do was to pray to God.

Yes, that was until now...

Melissa and the others did not do anything spectacular.

They only used an elementary level magic art belonged to the wind magic that caused a gust of wind.

Normally it was used as an attack magic, it was a fundamental basis for wind attribute users, which used the compressed wind to perform an attack.

But rather than compressing the wind and release it all at once, they diffused the wind little by little.

Of course, such wind won't cause any damage, but it was enough for the ship to move.

Since it would be unusable if the wind were too strong and ended up damaging the sails.

They might have been new magic users, but at the same time, it was making what they did quite meaningful.

And for Melissa and the others, after having seen the usefulness of their immature skills it caused them danced in joy.

Furthermore this method also a perfect way for practice.

Knowing they were being needed, they begin to show a self-confidence. -

Other than that, the happy feeling of returning to Sirius city after a few months being away must be quite high within her.

Despite the city located at the place where many people hated it, the city itself was without a doubt a second hometown for her. -

“Listen! I know you guys already being told by Lady Simone, but don't forget, don't ever tell anyone about what we going to see here anywhere else. Understand?”

Contrary to his usual gentle attitude, Braz ordered his crewmen with a tough voice.

The seamen nodded in silent toward their captain's order while preparing to anchor the ship.

This was the second time they had performed this voyage.

Although the sailors were feeling fed up being told those words repeatedly, they also understand why they were being told that over and over again.

And they also understood what they should never spoke about.

It was to that extent how surprised they were when they first saw Sirius city.

It was a well-organized cityscape.

The city had a well kept wide paved roads.

The wall surrounded the entire city was also quite extensive.



And of course, that alone was not the things that caused them feeling surprised.

Looking at the scale, one would easily saw something like that in this continent if they go to a territory belonged to an affluent aristocrat family.

However, the thing they felt surprised about was the place where the city was being build, it was being build on the Wortenia peninsula.

All the more surprising when they found out that the city was being built just a few months ago.

“Captain... is by any chance, my eyes broke?”

A sailor talked to Braz while rubbing his eyes when they saw Sirius city that gradually appeared in front of them.

Braz did not need to ask the matters in detail.

He himself was also unable to believe the sight which spreads in front of him. -

“Don't worry. Your eyes are good...”

“I see... Then I was right...”

Braz nodded his head in affirmation.

“Indeed... The city has become bigger...”

Clearly, the scale of the city had become bigger compared to the first time Braz saw it.

Even the size of the harbor was 1.5 times bigger.

(I can't tell anyone about this. If I do, they might doubt my sanity instead...)

Such thought crossed Braz mind.

It might be possible to build such city if one were to use tens of thousands people to work, but having to build such city in a place called Wortenia peninsula might cause every people to say such task as impossible.

Around two months ago, together with another ship owned by Simone named Melanion, Braz had delivered 1,000 slaves, but, even with that, it was impossible to build such city with just that.

Not to mention, the slaves that Braz had delivered were just some young boys and girls. Those children who had received the harsh treatment of their slave merchants had a weak body.

Of course, they had been giving the slaves a proper meal on the ship during the trip, but it was impossible to recover one's health in one go.

(No wonder my lady warned us about it. I can't tell anyone about this...)

Braz then directed his line of sight toward Melissa and the others.

Vaguely he understood the mechanism behind this impossible scene.

“Oi you guys, what are you doing. Work faster! Prepare the anchor!”

Braz scolded his crewmen who looked stunned due to the spectacle.

Although he understood their feeling, he also knew that curiosity killed the cats...



The city's name was Sirius.

In Greek, it had the meaning of the “shinning/glowing/brilliant” one.

“Ryouma-sama. Atalanta has arrived.”

“Understood. Is there any damage to the goods?”

Responding to Ryouma's question Sara directed her eyes toward the parchment.

“Captain Braz have reported that the guys under Melissa command were useless during the voyage toward Mispoz due to seasickness, but on the returning trip, they seemed to have contributed enough...”

“Seasickness? Is that why they ended up late than planned? I did not see that coming...”

Certainly, it was impossible to ask someone worked on the ship while it was their first time ride on one.

There were people who had a constitution that made them hard to get seasick, but it seemed like the guys that were being put on Braz ship this time had a body constitution that made them easy to get seasickness.

In fact, it was quite surprising that they all managed to overcome their seasickness during the return trip.

(Well, I guess it can't be helped since it was their first time. I guess I can't get angry over this... They said that those who easily get motion sick are those who have a strong mental spirit...)

Ryouma lightly smiled while listening to the report.

“There seems no damaged goods. Fortunately, due to the good weather, there were no goods destroyed by sea water or other cause.”

If one were to encounter a storm during goods transport voyage., some load might collapse or ended up getting covered by sea water, but it seemed like this time they have been lucky.

“I understand. I want to prioritize on procuring the weapon and preserved food for now. As for the payment, is it alright if we use the fangs and leathers obtained from the monsters only?”

“It seems to be enough for now. However, Simone-san also has written some letters, because there are not many suppliers, she wants to increase the number of fangs and leathers being delivered.”

“Increasing the quantity huh?”

Ryouma entered a deep thought after he heard Sara's report.

Many monsters inhabiting the Wortenia peninsula had high priced materials in them, and if one were to go to the market with those materials, it would without a doubt

being sold at a good price.

Ryouma had originally wanted to leave all the fangs and leathers he had acquired to Simone, but he cannot reduce the amount he had currently sold to the merchants from Epiroz either.

If he reduced the amount he sold to Epiroz merchants, they might realize another trade route existed.

“What about the new people that are currently under training?”

“They only begin the training less than two months ago, thus it would be quite hard to push them into a real battle immediately...”

Ryouma had thought of increasing the procurement of the fangs and leathers by increasing the amount of hunting, but if the soldiers were lacking in training they might have ended up as fodder for the monsters instead.

“If that the case then we have no choice but to let Simone wait a bit longer...”

Because the supply cannot keep up with the demand, it cannot be helped.

(Also, it would be bad if the price collapsed because we sold too much of it too...)

Ryouma had those thoughts while nodding lightly.

“Also... There's something worrisome...”

Ryouma frowned at Sara's words.

When Sara said it like that, it meant something really bad.

Of course, it was not her fault, it was just the way she wording it always caused some unnecessary anxiety.

“Is this regarding the demi-humans?”

“Yes, there's also regarding that matter written in Simone's letter...”

Right now, Ryouma's biggest concern was the demi-humans existence.

The other day, Ryouma had delivered the three girls rescued from the hands of the pirates to their leaders, but at the time he arrived at their place, he received a hard time...

In a novel, usually the other party would've ended up felt indebted to him, and immediately get along with each other, but the reality was not that sweet.

It was not like they didn't show any gratitude.

It was just they seemed to be unable to trust the human named Mikoshiba Ryouma immediately.

After all, they were races that have been discriminated by the humans.

The heavy history of that persecution tied their heart.

In fact they did not want to get involved with the humans.

That was their true feeling.

That was why Ryouma spent a considerable time to persuade them.

For Ryouma, he could not leave this matter alone.

He wanted to absorb them under his rule, he wanted to obtain their power.

Otherwise, there was no point for him opening a base in Wortenia peninsula.

Once he managed to maintain his maritime authority, the only way to invade Wortenia peninsula was via Epiroz.

Which meant he can finally concentrate his forces to the south.

This was one of the greatest advantages of the peninsula being situated in the corner of the continent.

And it would have been impossible to do that if there were another hostile power within the peninsula.

He needed to do this all because it was necessary for him to secure a certain amount of strength.

That was why, Ryouma made a suggestion to Nelsios, one of their clan leaders.

He suggested that Nelsios and the other clan's leaders visit Sirius city once every half a month, and have a dinner with him.

Having regularly met and ate with each other, even if it was just a little, he wanted to amend some of the distrust they had harbored toward the humans.

Although it was a roundabout way, but due to the distrust and fear toward the human was very strong, the negotiations itself usually broke down just because some slight demand was made.

That was also why Ryouma had paid more attention regarding the demi-humans, well, other than that he had no other problems.

Until he read the content of Simone's letter.....

# Chapter 2

## Creeping Shadow of War 2

*Night, Day 6th, 10th Month, the Year 2813, Western Continent Calendar.*

“There is some movement within the kingdom of Ernestgora. Soon, tens of thousands of soldiers would move toward the kingdom of Zalda...”

Having finished reading the letter sent by Simone, Ryouma crushed the letters while clicking his tongue.

The food and weapon prices were rising. Several knights that usually fighting in the western province near Kirtantia began to appear in the eastern region, so they might make a move in less than a month.

“It seems like she has formed quite a good intelligence organization...”

Simone's role was to trade and perform intelligence activity.

While Genou responsible for defense against uninvited guest entering the peninsula, and assassination of adversaries, Simone job was to gather day to day information within the continent one by one.

Famine, pestilence, war, rebellion.

There was always some movement in the market before and after those incidents happen.

In case of famine, food prices would usually rise, and medicine prices would rise when plague happened.

Economy activity within a country can be said as a mirror which projected the information within the country itself.

It was easy to predict military movement just by looking at the movement of weapons and foods like this.

In that regard, it can be said that Simone had played her role quite well.

“Indeed, she seems to have done her best.”

Hearing Sara's words, Ryouma nodded his head in silence.

However, his expression was sharp contrary to his behavior. -

“The timing is really bad...”

“Well, even if we complain, nothing going to change...”

Having Sara said those words to him made Ryouma relaxed his expression.

War was something equal to a big rock being thrown into a calm water surface.

Just like the thrown rock shake the water surface violently, warfare had various influences on the neighboring countries just like water ripples spread toward every direction.

Whether or not such influence was good to one's country, but there was one thing that was clearly true.

That no matter how small, there must have been some influence happens.

And the problem was that one cannot predict where the impact would've come from.

Not only ended with food prices rising, depending on the situation Rozeria might have to deploy a reinforcement to the kingdom of Zalda. -

Right now, Bolts was the one who responsible for the territory security. Currently, he was in charge of building a fort in the Tilt mountain range foot, together with 50 elite soldiers.

This fort was being built under Earl Salzberg permission he got during the other day's meeting, it was being built under the pretext of defense against monsters invasion toward Epiroz direction.

But the real purpose for this fort was to eliminate adventurers and spy who tried to enter Wortenia peninsula from Epiroz.

Monsters were mostly harmful to an industrial city but currently, those monsters were

an important product of Wortenia peninsula.

There was also the problem with the demi-humans.

In order to build a trusted relationship with the demi-humans, it was necessary for them to trust the man named Mikoshiba Ryouma, but it would have been impossible if those adventurers entered the peninsula and screw things up.

Since there was also the possibility that those humans would try to make them slaves just like how the pirates treat them.

It would be fatal for their situation where trust was almost non-existence in their relationship. -

Right now, it was impossible for Ryouma to let adventurers entered his territory on their own initiative.

And just like Ryouma had predicted, after Bolts started to perform his duty, the intrusions of adventurers entered his territory started to decline.

Some people were tried to enter the territory without using the highway, but the disposal of those people was left to Genou and his clan.

And the result of that policy was not bad.

However, the war on the neighboring country may spread during this important times.

No rather, the war would without a doubt spread over. -

Such situation was something that Ryouma could never afford since he wanted to focus on the development of the peninsula.

“But still, the main battlefield is in the kingdom of Zalda. There should not be much of direct impact on us...”

Indeed, Sara's word was right.

There was indeed no doubt that there would be some impact due to the war, but even if Rozeria were to send some reinforcement to the Zalda Kingdom, if Ryouma was not involved in such troublesome things, he should not felt too much of an impact caused by the war.

However, Ryouma could not agree with Sara.

Ryouma felt some ominous premonition, that something that could affect them would happen. -

Currently, Ryouma had a few soldiers.

Although recently, Genou's clan had joined, his fighting strength was still fewer than four hundreds men.

It takes some time for the slaves delivered by Simone to become something.

Besides, even if their training was over, Ryouma ability to mobilize his armed force would still not exceed 1,000.

He might only be able to mobilize 800 to 900 men at a time. And if everything did not proceed according to plan, he might only be able to mobilize around 600 men.

Since an ordinary knights group consist of 2,500 men, Ryouma could only mobilize half of that.

Of course, for a local lord, the number of soldiers reflected on their strength.

All the more if all of the soldiers could use magic arts.

Although the current number Ryouma had were already considerable enough for a defense force.

But...

(Should we lower the training method, for the sake of increasing the soldier numbers ASAP? I should ask Simone to prepare another 1,000 people... After that, I can rush their training...)

For Ryouma's intuition, the current numbers of his soldiers were something critical.

After being summoned to this world, Ryouma had experienced many things in life.

And one of them was that if he did not prepare everything in advance, it might cause him or his friend's death.



“Fumu... This city has quite a stiff structure. Is that drains beside the road? I guess that was for preventing the escaped rainwater?”

While looking at the scene outside the window, Jinouchi Ginai muttered those words.

The moonlight illuminates the cityscape.

This place was one section of the city which Ryouma had given it to the Iga clan.

In one room of the mansion that was being built in the center, five men and women sitting surrounding the table.

They were the elders who decided the future policy of the Iga clan.

“That is right. That was Master idea. Such method also being put in practice along the highway.”

“He seems to have thought it well, in a various way...”

Answering Genou, Jinouchi nodded his head in admiration.

“Although it lacks artistry, it is quite a functional city. Also, the rate of the development surprisingly fast...”

Ryuusai also began to spoke some words of admiration.

The scenery outside of the window changed every day.

This city was a city that was still expanding.

And it was not being developed without thought too.

Under careful calculation, the city land arrangement was made.

“Still, it really lacks elegance.”

Osae then began to speak as if she was in disagreement.

According to Osae, the Sirius city was well thought in term of functionality, but in term

of artistic aesthetic, it was completely ignored.

Somehow, the city gives off an artificial feeling.

If they had used the way Japanese built their house using timber, it might be different, but Ryouma who was feeling cautious in case fire broke out decided to use stone as the main material for the building.

That alone shows how rough this city was.

“Well, we're currently in the middle of a war against time after all. There's no time to think of such thing as elegance.”

“Don't say that Jinouchi-san. Just like capital city Kyoto, it has such elegance no? Anyway, it would be troublesome if I ended up being a lord of a frontier place...”

Oume lightly rebuked Jinouchi's words as if neglecting the important part.

Elegance.

It might be better to express that sophisticated artistry as a culture.

Being practically functional was not wrong, but that alone was not enough.

Culture is power.

It had different power compared to violence, and it was also important for a country to have them.

It was an important element alongside the armed force. One can steal a country just by using the power of culture.

“Well, we can think about that in the future. Right now, we have no time to worry about elegance.”

Culture might be an important element for a country, but some country ended up getting destroyed because they were overwhelmed by their own culture. Ryuusai words was reasonable. -

“Our Lord seems to have some interest in the demi-humans cultures. Well, we can start

thinking about various things after we win over those guys first. Which mean, we still have a long way to go..."

A subtle frightened expression of demi-humans appeared within Genou's mind.

Although compared to their first meeting, they had already able to talk normally with each other, but if one were to ask whether or not they shared a relationship where they opened their heart, it was something hard to answer.

The only salvation was that at least the humans on our side did not show any disgust toward the demi-humans.

The majority of people living in the Sirius city were still in early teenage, and the mercenaries also seemed not holding any fanatical belief.

If Ryouma had chosen to be hostile to the demi-humans, they would mercilessly remove them, but it was considerably lucky that Ryouma did not have any intention to be hostile just because of religious value.

Time should fill the gap in their hearts.

"I, as expected, I think Mikoshiba Ryouma as someone whom the first generation had waited for, but what about you guys?"

Toward Genou's question, everyone was silent.

They had wished for a Lord.

For that reason alone, the family had continued to refine their ability and moving from one place to another for the past 500 years.

They wandered around in search of a lord.

Sometimes they were despised and persecuted as a foreigner by other people.

And finally, now they had found it. And the name of that man was Mikoshiba Ryouma.

"The time to talk with the branch family might come sooner... Afterwards whether or not Mikoshiba manages to control that..."

A murmuring leaked from Oume's mouth.

The eyes of five people were poured into a sword that was being held in front of a shrine.

The sword named Tsubaki was being kept sleeping inside its white sheath.

Waiting for a worthy lord to hold it.

# Chapter 3

## Messenger from a neighboring country 1

*Noon, Day 3rd, 11th Month, the Year 2813, Western continent calendar.*

On that day, The Royal Palace at the royal capital city of Pireaus was filled with heavy air.

The senior bureaucrats ran through the relevant department with a pale face, and the military leaders have been forced to attend meetings. The Knights were waiting in their predetermined dormitory without anyone dared to take an off-duty, they were ordered to prepare their weapons.

Within the royal palace, people moving around in hurry.

However, most of them were people performed what they were ordered to do.

As a matter of fact, only a limited number of people knew the situation.

Although it can be said that not all of them were able to grasp accurately the current situation.

Some people who passed a certain room within the royal castle they gazed at a certain room's door for a moment with a tense expression, then they hurriedly left the place.

It was a room in the royal palace closed with a thick iron door...

"I see... I understand that... But, It is impossible..."

A deep sigh leaked from Lupis.

Meltina's report had made her heart turn gloomy.

Or rather, anxiety and sorrow were floating on the faces of the people gathered in this room.

Inside the room, there were Lupis and his two aides, Meltina and Mikhail. Elena who

was responsible for the military affairs. Earl Bergstone and other influential nobles from civil servant department.

“But your majesty... This cannot be ignored...”

“I know... But, do you think there's such power left in this country to perform it?”

Lupis answered Meltina's words with a tone of resignation.

Even Lupis understood that she cannot leave this matter alone.

In fact, Lupis convinced that this problem needs an absolute attention.

Despite her drawback of being easily discouraged, she was not someone incompetent.

And as a royal family member, she had received the highest education money can afford.

She was someone who could see reality as it was when she did not lose her calm.

From her point of view, the current problem had brought the Kingdom of Rozeria into a state of dilemma.

“This is definitely impossible... Especially when we need to pay more extra attention to the nobles in our countries... But then...”

“But then, we can't ignore this request either... Regardless of the civil war, nearly one year had passed... Of course, from the viewpoint of reconstructing national strength, it will take more time, but we cannot use that as an excuse...”

Following Meltina's frustrated words, Earl Bergstone opened his mouth.

His gaze was directed toward the two letters on the desk.

After the civil war ended, for his merits he had been given an important post due to his high political and governance capability.

Especially, he had good sense when it comes to the political situation and power balance between countries.

From his point of view, the challenge brought to this country this time was some kind of an invitation into an endless labyrinth without any way out.

(No matter which choice we make, the future of this country is...)

Such thought appeared inside his mind.

Two letters were presented in front of Lupis.

One was a letter that was being sent frequently from the Kingdom of Zalda since the war with Ortomea Empire started, it was a request for reinforcement sent by Julianus.

The content of the letters was the same with the others that had been sent since the Rozeria civil war ended.

The Zalda Kingdom that was being defeated by the Ortomea Empire during Notiz plain battle had lost most of their territory.

In order to break through the predicament, it was obvious for the Zalda Kingdom to seek reinforcements from the Rozeria Kingdom and the Mist Kingdom.

Since it was impossible for the Zalda Kingdom alone to fight against Ortomea Empire who had dominated the central part of the western continent.

And yet even with that dominance. The Ortomea Empire still could be defeated if the three countries, namely, Rozeria, Zalda, and Mist bend together.

In fact, together, they had managed to prevent Ortomea Empire invasion in the past.

Although they did it not because of friendship or something such as chivalrous spirits.

They simply did it because it was necessary for their survival.

If the buffer country called Zalda disappeared, Rozeria would suffer direct invasion.

Thus, it can be said that the other two countries sent their reinforcement to the Zalda Kingdom because of their own interest.

However, for a whole year now, Lupis had declined to sent reinforcement on the pretext that her country just recovered from a civil war, and she needed time to recover her country strength.

Or rather, the truth was that she could not dispatch soldiers even if she wanted to.

As a result of getting rid General Hodram who held the military power for many years,

reorganization of the chivalric order was put in motion, and as a result of that, significant military strength was reduced.

(As expected, we should've eliminated Duke Gerhardt back then... Ah I forgot, he is a Viscount now... Anyway, it does not matter for Gerhard even if his rank dropped. In fact, he had taken up the situation quite plainly...)

Such thought appeared inside Earl Bergstone mind.

In actuality, despite he got his rank lowered, from Duke to Viscount, Gerhardt influence on the nobles did not disappear.

In fact, because princess Ladine was officially recognized as royalty, the aristocrats that stand against Lupis began to form a solid unity.

Because Lupis wanted to create her own power structure, many nobles were being forced out of their position since the civil war ended.

Even if it was reasonable in her eyes to cut off people who took Gerhardt side, for those who were being cut off, they did not understand that.

Nevertheless, if Gerhardt had died, even if they felt dissatisfied, they won't be able to unite.

With Gerhardt ability, and Ladine name as a cause.

They managed to block Lupis path at every turn.

(Even if we sacrifice Mikhail Banashu... Ah I guess it was too late even if I think of this huh...??)

Earl Bergstone directed his gaze at Mikhail who was silent since a while ago.

That was his regret.

They should have managed to achieved complete victory back then.

If only, at that time, they did not accept Gerhardt capitulation.

(Having no other option aside, Mikoshiba-dono should have thought of something back then...)

Earl Bergstone also understood what had happened back then.

He himself had participated in the conference and he also received a proper explanation from Elena after that.

When he understood it, he thought that it cannot be helped.

But, even under such circumstance, he ended up holding a small anger against Mikoshiba Ryouma who let Lupis fell under Gerhardt mercy without being able to argue back.

Or at least, in the Earl's point of view, if Lupis did not let Gerhardt getaway, Ladine would get executed, and half of Rozeria Kingdom's problem would have been solved.

And as a further result of that act, even if it was only superficially, those who did not like Lupis would still follow her.

If that happens, they should be able to dispatch soldiers to Zalda.

“There's also another big problem, that is the trend of movement within the Mist Kingdom. Their reinforcements are already close to our border, and as soon as we approve their passage, they will immediately be able to cross... And my country cannot refuse this... If we refuse this one, we will have to fight against the Mist Kingdom. If that happens, it would lessen the possibility of the Zalda Kingdom survival...”

Bergstone's words caused the air within the room grew heavier.

He said those words while looking at the second letter.

The Mist Kingdom definitely won't pull back from this.

Since if they abandoned Zalda kingdom, the Ortomea Empire army would run through the Eastern countries like an avalanche.

In reality, if the three countries fought individually, there won't be any chance of winning.

All three countries individual strength was far smaller compared to Ortomea Empire.

With how Rozeria had been acted up all this time, one could say that both countries have been patient in dealing with Rozeria.

“I have no choice but to sent reinforcement huh?...”

Lupis murmured those words while shaking her head.

There was no other option.

“The question now is how many troops we can send, but from the perspective of our current domestic situation, dispatching one order of knight is all we can do.”

Disappointment spread across the room when they heard Meltina's words.

“2,500...”

Earl Bergston spoke on behalf everyone's feeling in the room.

The number was too small to be called reinforcement.

At least they should send 5,000.

10,000 should be the minimum looking at the current situation.

Of course, it did not mean one had to use the knights under the kingdom direct control alone, but cooperation from the nobles seemed to be unlikely right now.

Everyone felt restless and air of anxiety covered the entire Rozeria Kingdom. Right now, all of the people anticipated and paid more attention to Gerhardt movement.

In this case, faction was not the problem.

Even Earl Bergstone and Earl Zeref who held the position close to the queen could not muster any soldiers.

Since if civil war broke out once again while they were being dispatched to another country, their noble territory would turn into ashes.

With such domestic situation within the Rozeria Kingdom, they could not afford to participate other country's war.

“The nobles could not move. We might conscript commoners but... I honestly think the number won't be big enough... Of course, we can threaten them to join but...”

“By doing that, they will only pull our legs instead...”

Hearing Meltina's suggestion, Lupis shook her head in disagreement.

If they conscript soldiers, they could meet the numbers they needed.

In fact, they could easily recruit 20,000 or 30,000 men.

Even 100,000 was possible.

However, one could not clearly expect them to be a proper fighting force.

And on the contrary, they might be ended up as a baggage instead.

That was because this war was not invasion war.

If this was an invasion war, people would be willing to fight for their country.

Because they would be allowed to loot villages, or even to rape women.

While the enemy captured citizen can be sold as slaves.

There were certain sufficient merits enough to bet one own life.

However, this war was a reinforcement to help another country.

They could not loot or assault the people they defended.

If they were allowed to do such thing, then it won't be counted as helping.

Certainly, food, clothing, and shelter were guaranteed, but that was only the minimum.

It might change if they managed to capture the enemy's commander during the war, but such fortune should not be expected.

They would only get paid a small amount of gold.

With such amount, one could say it was not enough to bet one own life for it.

That's why, conscripting the commoners would only cause the soldiers' morale ended up low, while also increasing the troubles as well.

And the scariest thing was that those 'commoners turned into soldiers' might accidentally attack Zalda citizen out of frustration.

Even if it was a short-term operation, it would be hard to sent reinforcement compiled

of conscripted soldiers.

“There is no other choice but to sent commanders whom the other two countries could accept.”

Everyone nodded toward Earl Zereff words.

They absolutely could not lose.

If Zalda ended up being defeated here, Ortomea Empire would turn their fangs toward the Rozeria Kingdom.

Thus, this war was something that Zalda, Mist, and Rozeria could not afford to lose.

But if Rozeria only sent small reinforcement, they might not be regarded contributing to the victory.

In fact, for such lack of support, the two other countries might demand big concession in term of trades instead.

“I will go...”

Elena finally opened her mouth.

And hearing what she said, everyone fell in silence.

“Are you sure? Elena?”

Finally, Lupis asked for confirmation.

On her face, a sense of guilt can be seen.

In a sense, it was natural for her to feel that way.

Since she could only give her 2,500 men to command as reinforcement.

Furthermore, this was not only a matter of reinforcement. They needed to persuade the other two countries when it comes to war merits later.

To put it bluntly, Elena was about to receive the short end of the stick.

“Of course, your majesty.”

Inside Elena's heart who nodded her head, strong will to fight can be felt.

Since she realizes that there was no other choice to save the Rozeria Kingdom.

Even when it comes to Lupis closest associate, Meltina or Mikhail, they both have not yet made their name known around the neighborhood countries.

No one would be convinced that Rozeria had sent reinforcement if these two only bring 2,500 soldiers.

It was obvious that friction would happen.

In that respect, by sending [Rozeria's white goddess of war], along with the small reinforcement, it should have been enough to convince the other two countries that they were truly a reinforcement.

“In that case, since Elena-sama would be the commander-in-chief, there should be another person who needs to act as her adjutant.”

Everyone nodded hearing Meltina's words.

“Indeed that is true. But, who are we going to send as her adjutant, is there anyone competent enough for the job? Should Mikhail-dono go? Or Meltina-dono?”

Earl Zereff question was natural.

In the present Rozeria Kingdom, only a small amount of military official present.

Not only that, those two people had work which substitute could not do.

And once they dispatched as a reinforcement, it would be six months later until they returned to Rozeria. While depending on the war situation, it might actually take years for them to come back.

Thus, they could not afford to sent them.

However, they also could not let Elena go by herself to a battlefield that equal to a suicide mission either.

Everyone fell silent, and a short time later, a man broke the silence.

“How about we asked Mikoshiba-dono to go?”

# Chapter 4

## Messenger from a neighboring country 2

*Noon, Day 3rd, 11 Month, the Year 2813, Western continent calendar.*

“What are you trying to say, Mikhail. Do you know what you are talking about?”

Earl Bergstone raised his voice.

Due to his anger, he had completely forgotten about courtesy.

He also called Mikhail without an honorific, but nobody was going to reprimand him.

It was because Mikhail's words were too unexpected and also shameless.

(This bastard... Right after he was being freed from his punishment of house arrest...)

Since the meeting began, Mikhail had been quiet, and the Earl had thought he was being thoughtful after his punishment, but apparently, it was Earl Bergstone misunderstood.

“Mikhail-dono... Just what is your intention by saying that?”

Earl Zareff inhales his breath deeply and slowly began to talk. He also turned his investigative gaze toward Mikhail.

In his words, wariness toward Mikhail can be felt.

“Is there even alternative to my suggestion? I'm confident that based on the result, I think it was the best choice we have.”

Certainly, thinking about the result, Mikhail suggestion was correct.

It was certainly due to the man named Mikoshiba Ryouma, Queen Lupis managed to obtain victory.

Originally his name should have been mentioned early, but no one ever mentioned that name.

Or rather, it can be said that they had intentionally erased that name from inside their head.

“If you're serious with that then, I can only doubt your pride...”

Anger oozing out from Earl Zeref.

Since he was someone who rarely spoke, and always act behind the scenes, his words were especially felt heavy.

However, Mikhail returned his gaze with a cold light on his eyes while smiling.

“Is that so? He used to be a commoner, and now he is a nobleman. Isn't it reasonable to ask him to help Rozeria in time of crisis? Furthermore, this might be our last chance. If we miss this opportunity, the country might get destroyed. Am I wrong?”

He was not wrong.

Certainly, Mikoshiba Ryouma once was a commoner. Furthermore, he was a mercenary with doubtful origin.

If one were to take Mikhail words as it was, his words were certainly correct.

And because he had gained nobleman status from the Royal family, it can be said that it was obvious for him to defend the country.

Well, that might be correct if we all ignore the reality where Queen Lupis pushed him into Wortenia peninsula which filled with monsters because she feared him.

Following Mikhail's words, Lupis was silent.

However, fear accompanied with a sense of guilt appeared inside her heart. And also, a single hope.

And everyone knew what inside Lupis heart.

That she probably thought the same thing as Mikhail somewhere in the corner of her heart.

Or rather, everyone inside the room might have the same thought somewhere inside their mind but unable to voice it.

Certainly, that answer might be the only way to save the current Rozeria.

“I admit, I understand why you suggest that name but, I'm not sure if he is going to agree...”

Earl Bergstone spoke while waving his head.

A sharp sarcasm was included in his words.

He spoke as if he was making fun of someone somewhere.

Of course, the Earl himself wanted to ask Mikoshiba Ryouma for help.

Considering his skill during the time of civil war, it can be said that his ability trumped everyone in the present Rozeria Kingdom.

And now, considering the current situation the Rozeria Kingdom was in, there was no reason to conserve a trump card.

If the kingdom of Zalda surrendered to the Ortomea Empire, next they would without a doubt attack Rozeria next time.

And at that time, without being able to perform any resistance, the kingdom would be destroyed.

Most of Rozeria Kingdom territory were plains.

They had many populations due to their land being blessed with a good natural irrigation for farming, but because of that, they had limited numbers of topography which they can call a stronghold.

The open field was a good place to perform military effort on a grand scale.

That was why, if the Empire could move beyond the western mountain range where they had a border with the Kingdom of Zalda, they will be able to overrun the Rozeria kingdom with their overwhelming soldiers.

Once they invaded the Rozeria Kingdom, even reinforcement from the Mist Kingdom can be said to be meaningless.

That was why, if one were to consider only the circumstance regarding the kingdom, Mikhail's proposal was completely correct.

His words have accurately spoken the truth regarding the current national strength of the kingdom of Rozeria.

And it would be meaningless to reserve the strongest card if they really needed it.

However, that was if they could ask Mikoshiba Ryouma, if they could do that, they won't be worrying like this.

And it was also natural for Earl Bergstone to shows some anger.

Because all of this mess started due to the mistake of the man called Mikhail Banashu who was sitting in front of him.

Because he wanted to gain military merits, he had disobeyed an order that caused him being captured and turned into a prisoner of war.

But when Mikhail heard what Earl Bergstone had said, Mikhail did not change his expression.

“There is no need to convince him. Just order him. Then, if he declined, we can just label him as a rebel. If he declined to help during a national crisis, then he is disqualified as a nobleman.”

There was not even a single piece of emotion could be felt from his words.

Just monotone voice.

“Did you lost your mind?”

Earl Bergstone doubted Mikhail's sanity while he seemed to have completely forgotten that the Queen was in front of him.

“Earl Bergstone, did you think I was wrong? Why should we keep a noble alive if they had no loyalty to the Royal family?”

“What did you say... If you said that, if that is a nobleman's duty, then most of the nobles of this country would be targeted.”

They began to use hostility to speak with each other.

Most of the current Rozeria aristocracy did not hold such unconditional loyalty to the royal family.

Even without Ladine presence, they will still be a non-cooperative attitude to some extent from the aristocracy.

Earl Bergstone himself had only promised to swear loyalty to Lupis because he was promised of an important post after the civil war had ended.

Even so, there was a limit to everything.

(Nothing had changed, even after one year had passed...)

Earl Bergstone was a bystander during the start of the civil war a year ago.

Many times, Meltina and the princess had called for help but he did not accept it.

That was because they had asked for help with a reason of pure loyalty.

Loyalty to the royal family. It was certainly a nice word to the ears.

However, that alone won't make people move.

Mikhail should have known that as well.

Because Mikoshiba Ryouma had demonstrated how to move someone in front of them one year ago.

“Why did you look impatient like this?”

Suddenly Elena who was keeping silent all this time opened her mouth.

“Impatient? Of course. That is because we only have a little time left. And if necessary it will be better if we execute Baron Mikoshiba to make an example for the other nobles, don't you think so?”

Due to Elena's unexpected words, Mikhail somehow becomes angry.

“I see... So that is how you really thought.”

Hearing Elena's reply, Mikhail's face distorted.

Due to Elena's previous unexpected question, Mikhail had ended up spoke unnecessary words.

Certainly, his words were true, it might be useful to do that in term of making an example for the nobles.

However, there was no need to target Mikoshiba Ryouma just to do that.

After all, there were many other candidates for sacrifices.

(This guy... As expected, he holds some grudge over what had happened...)

Earl Bergstone instantly realized.

Certainly, Mikhail's claim was something that was right at first glance.

However, it was hard to understand the true intention of someone behavior.

To insist on doing something meant that there was some personal intention behind it.

“I do not understand what you're trying to imply.”

It seemed like Mikhail had decided to play dumb, although everyone thought it was already too late.

“Did you hate Mikoshiba Ryouma that much? That time, it was your fault you know? I think it is irrelevant for you to hate him.”

“I don't understand what you mean by that.”

The moment Earl Bergstone gaze at Mikhail's eyes at the time he said those words, he could feel the cold sweat run down his spine.

(That eyes...)

He could feel hatred from Mikhail's gaze. It was a hatred close to that of an obsession.

It was an attitude that was very unusual if one were to remember the old Mikhail.

He might be thoughtless and careless as a human being, but this was the first time for him to show a hostility against one individual.

A spark scattered between the three people.

“Enough!”

Lupis voice resounded within the room.

“I've decided... First of all, Elena. Please contact Mikoshiba Ryouma to come to the royal palace. We don't know if he is going to refuse or not, thus we can discuss again regarding how to dispose of him after he truly refused. Is that alright with you, Elena?”

“Your majesty...”

Lupis spoke rapidly ignoring the stunned Meltina.

She could not let the useless discussion to continue.

Thinking that Lupis decided to stop worrying.

It might not actually just that.

She might felt the cold atmosphere, and tried to protect Mikhail again.

“I will dispatch him as reinforcement. Since preparation is necessary, he can come here in one month. Also, tell the army of Mist kingdom which is waiting at the border that we give them the permission to pass. Do you all understand? Earl Bergstone prepares everything in one month.”

“In one month? That a bit too close. Also, are you sure we should let Mist kingdom pass just as it is?”

“There is no other choice. The impression of both countries toward us would be bad if we do not move fast. Not only that, it will also take time for us to deliver the message to the border... Is that enough?”

It takes time to move an army.

Especially when an army was being dispatched to a foreign country, they needed a huge amount of supplies.

It was natural that Earl Bergstone showed a frowned face, but there was not much time left.

The time left to think was already over.

Even looking at the letter sent by the Zalda Kingdom, one could understand they won't be able to wait much longer.

Well, no matter what the reason, this was a ruler decision.

As a minister, one can only nod.

“““Certainly, Your Majesty!”““

Everyone who was sitting on the chairs began to stand up, they immediately stood up and obey the royal order.

Everything was for the sake of protecting the Rozeria Kingdom.

“Why did you say such thing?”

Three people remained inside the room.

“I just proposed the best method to protect this country as your subject.”

Toward Lupis' question, Mikhail said those words without hesitation.

His voice was cold, unlike how he was in the past.

“Is that really true...?”

“What do you majesty mean by that?”

Mikhail expression did not change even after Lupis looked at him questioningly.

His expression looked like a doll, almost with no emotion left.

“Mikhail-dono. Such attitude toward her majesty is...”

“It's fine, Meltina.”

“But...”

While suppressing Meltina who was trying to reprimand Mikhail, Lupis looked at Mikhail with sad eyes.”

“Fine then, you may leave.”

“Well then, please excuse me.”

She could not do anything other than watching Mikhail as he left the room with sad eyes.

“Why everything ended up like this...”

Meltina could not answer Lupis muttering words.

The reason was clear.

However, she could not put out the words.

“Your majesty did nothing wrong.”

Meltina did not have any other choice other than to said those words...

# Chapter 5

## Messenger from a neighboring country 3

*Midnight, 3rd Day, 11th Month, the Year 2813, Western continent calendar.*

In a private room within the royal castle given to Mikhail. two men confronted each other across the lamp placed on the desk.

One was the master of this room.

The other was a man who should not be inside this room.

“It seems the dispatch of troops has been decided as planned.”

Toward the sudden words Sudou had spoken, Mikhail who was sitting across him frowned.

“How did you know that? We still have not yet make it public you know?”

It was decided during the meeting today that the kingdom would sent reinforcement.

Such information had already been issued to the public offices, but the man in front of Mikhail should not be part of any of such offices.

Even if he will find out sooner or later, it was surprising that he could find out about it within the same day the decision was made.

“Even if you tried to hide it, such information would spread sooner or later.”

Toward Sudou's arrogant attitude, Mikhail frowned further.

“As usual you're as arrogant as ever huh. Sudou...”

It sounded like he was complimented him but, Mikhail's eyes obviously showed despise

toward Sudou.

'You're just a vulgar commoner who was sneaking around the castle.'

Although he did not put those words out, Sudou felt like Mikhail gaze told him so.

"Well, I have no other talent than that."

"Fuuh... I could not understand why Ladine chooses a guy like you to be her aide."

"Similar to Mikhail-sama, one cannot evaluate the other's loyalty toward the royal family without accepting the good and the bad sides."

"But I don't think you have any loyalty to the Rozeria Kingdom."

Mikhail replied him while feeling displeased.

Looking at him, Sudou mocked Mikhail inside his mind.

(Such an idiot. Being unable to restrain himself with just a mere small provocation.)

Since last year's civil war was over, Mikhail image had plummeted.

If one had to say it clearly, in fact, it was not just decreasing but his image had turned into minus.

(I guess this guy has already been driven to a corner... What left is just for me to give him the finishing blow. Now then, how should I make him fall?)

Once he was known as Lupis adjutants he was praised as a glorious and best knight in the kingdom.

As a master swordsman, she had gained an unwavering trust from Lupis.

And his loyalty was once said to be one of Rozeria Kingdom treasure.

That was until he became a prisoner of war, being a prisoner of war was a huge embarrassment, and instead of getting punished accordingly, he only got himself a house arrest for a few month, not only that, after he was being released, Lupis picked him up as the commander of the royal guard, caused his colleagues to looked at him

with negative eyes.

Of course, it was natural for a ruler to put a reliable and trustworthy aide near you if you're Lupis. But the surrounding people won't understand that.

As a result, the surrounding thought of Mikhail as a coward who only survives because Lupis favored him.

And Mikhail reputation fell down to the ground following the rumor mixed with truth and lies made by Sudou spread inside and outside the castle.

His subordinates and colleagues gradually showed disdain toward him. And nobles started to ridicule him.

For someone as prideful as Mikhail, the current situation was a living hell.

If he was a truly wicked man then he won't care such situation.

But because he was genuinely a proud human, he was unable to bear such reality.

That was why he started to look down on others so that he can raise himself.

Despite knowing that doing such a thing would only narrow one's mind...

He tried to not depend on anyone, but because he tried to do that he ended up getting isolated. And because he was isolated from the surrounding, he fell down further.

Thus, just like that, Mikhail was unable to escape his own self-bondage.

"I course, I'm not someone with stature like Mikhail-sama after all. However, Ladine-sama is still a child. Even though she had already been recognized as a royalty, there were only a few people who swore loyalty from the bottom of their hearts to her. Even a vulgar person such as I could understand that you see."

"I see..."

Mikhail answered while showing a satisfied smile on his face.

Such small praise from him had already made Mikhail's small-pride satisfied.

Although he smiled at him while saying those words, Mikhail knew that it was a blatant flattery.

However, such poisonous words give off a sweet fragrant scent for Mikhail who has become weak after being ridiculed all the time by his subordinates and colleagues.

That was why, even if he knew that Sudou said a lie, he might just want to be caught by that sweet words...

“By the way... I had already made the suggestion, just as you said. Are you sure this will be fine?”

“Of course. Although this might sound rude, does Mikhail-sama have another way?”

Sudou asked Mikhail a question.

“That is... But how are we going to expect him to do it obediently? At worst, we might actually cause internal disturbance instead...”

As expected, although he hated Mikoshiba Ryouma for a personal reason, it seemed like a small amount of his judgmental ability was still intact.

(Truly, a contradiction huh... To think he gives suggestion during the meeting just like I had told him despite knowing this much. I wonder, how should I call this man head, a smart one or the other way around... Oh well, this is why you're suited to be my puppet.)

Sudou tried to suppress his ridicule while showing a soft smile toward Mikhail.

Although it was Sudou direction, Mikhail's mind and act were certainly contradicting each other.

Mikhail had lamented his current situation but he seemed to also have blamed Mikoshiba Ryouma for it.

Impatience, hatred, jealousy, anger.

Such burning feeling filled Mikhail's heart and mind thus clouded his normal judgment.

“If that's the case then everything should be fine. He will be viewed as the disloyal retainer, and Mikhail-sama loyalty toward the royal family would come to light once again.”

“But!”

“Do not be afraid to shed some blood when it comes to justice.”

“But still... This will go smoothly right?”

Mikhail's face was full of anxiety.

“Mikhail-sama. Do not be afraid. Everyone in the surrounding actually knows that Mikhail-sama is correct. Since it would be impossible to govern a state with a feeling of guilt. Sometimes one has to do absurd things to defend one own country. And right now, Mikhail-sama is the only one who could do it. For saving the Kingdom of Rozeria, for the sake of her highness Lupis!”

Sudou's strong words silenced Mikhail.

One minute, two minutes. Their line of sight crossed over in silence for a period of times.

“I understand... I will believe in you.”

“That's good. Then, afterward, just like we had planned.”

Sudou said those words and left Mikhail's room.

And Mikhail could only look at him in silence while he left.



Sudou who had left Mikhail's room walked as quickly as possible to avoid eye contacts with other people.

(Well, it has gone according to my plan, smoothly enough that I want to dance in joy...)

Recalled his meeting just now, a dark smile appeared on Suodu's face.

People believe what they wanted to believe.

After the civil war, Mikhail ability and personality had ended up being doubted by the others.

That was why the sweet words from Sudou easily invade Mikhail's heart.

As for his grudge against Mikoshiba Ryouma.

Well, it was actually just a mere small grudge.

However, after spending nearly a year together, Sudou had managed to turn that small grudge into a justice.

The justification of that justice was in the name of defending the Kingdom of Rozeria.

(But still, while thinking about the country, he actually ended up undermining his country with a pretext of loyalty toward the Royal family. Khuhuh, what a comical guy.)

Lupis confidence in Mikhail also had backfired.

The more she tried to protect him, the more Mikhail's surrounding ridiculed him.

When that happens, Lupis would protect him again. Then the vicious circle never end.

Well, of course, Sudou had also shed various rumors within and outside the royal castle by his own hands.

(I guess this is what happens if the bond between the ruler and retainer had gone too far huh...)

Such an irony.

Mikhail who holds such high loyalty did not hold any power in his hand, while Mikoshiba Ryouma who did not have any shred of loyalty ended up holding the future of this country.

(After this, how Mikoshiba Ryouma will move I wonder? He's kinda hard to predict. But this time, it's already the third time we confronted each other... I wish he will finally disappear this time. Now then, how is he going to move?)

Since the time Mikoshiba Ryouma got himself in this world, two years had passed since then.

Sudou's side had confronted him when they pursued him during the aftermath of

Gaies death, and during the involvement of Rozeria civil war, this was the third time his side was going up against Mikoshiba Ryouma.

(Although we will appreciate it if he's not participating, but based on how he usually move, he will definitely join the reinforcement mission... The problem now is how much the cost he will put in exchange for him to move since I'm sure he won't do it for free.)

Whether or not he wants to reinforce the Zalda Kingdom, the situation did not permit him to answer no.

If he refused to join the reinforcement, Mikoshiba Ryouma would be put in a difficult situation regardless the reinforcement obtained victory or defeat.

It would be a different story if he had already finished his preparation for independence, but such story was impossible if one were to think with common sense.

If that is the case, will Mikoshiba Ryouma participate with the reinforcement free of charges? Judging from his character, he will without a doubt demanded something from Lupis in a negotiation.

(Will it be money? Or territory?... There is the possibility of him asking rank as well... But well, if we think of something that is less troublesome, he might just demand some gold.)

It was clear that the development of Wortenia peninsula had not yet done, they won't be able to manage it if they increased the territory.

If he asked the free adjacent territory near the peninsula, such territory might have ended up as an enclave.

(If I remember correctly, the closest territory to the Wortenia peninsula belonged to Earl Salzberg, with a border with the Zalda Kingdom nearby... It would be impossible to give him who only held the title of a Baron such territory. Which left us with Gold or higher ranks, but considering his personality, there is a high chance that he won't ask for a higher rank. Since he is going to throw away the Rozeria Kingdom after all. Thus, he will definitely won't ask a higher rank from a country he was going to throw.)

It would be different if he was going to stay permanently within the Rozeria Kingdom.

Since Mikoshiba Ryouma might develop his own country or fall under the protection of another country, he won't ask higher rank as a reward.

However, it was certain that it would cost a lot of money to develop the Wortenia peninsula.

(I guess he will ask some gold... Now then, how much is he going to ask, I wonder...)

By the amount of money, he asked, one can predict Mikoshiba Ryouma movement in the future.

(If he asked for around tens of thousands then it might get paid for the next ten years, but if he asked more than a hundred million then... I might have to move up our plan a little bit...)

Sudou could not help but have fun with the current situation.

When he was summoned to this world, he had no choice but to lament the difference of the living environment, but he seemed to be better living in this world.

Manipulate and controls people using plans at every turn.

A sense of fulfillment that he won't be able to obtain in Japan.

Especially when his stratagem will decide the victor of a war that took place somewhere else.

(Now then, I can't wait for what happen next...)

Sudou smiled while feeling convinced that he will obtain victory.

# Chapter 6

## Messenger from a neighboring country 4

*Noon, 6th Day, 11 Month, the Year 2813, Western Continent Calendar.*

The city of Sirius was full of vigor.

The slave children that had been delivered the other day frantically swung their swords in order to grab their own fortune with their own hands, after five months of training, those who finished the trial will obtain freedom. They all worked hard in order to create their new hometown.

Everyone used their power to steadily develop the city.

They held Mikoshiba Ryouma, the one who returned back their dignity as a human beings, in high regard.



The air inside the room changed the moment Ryouma read the letter sent by Elena from the royal capital city of Pireaus.

Looking at the letter date, it was written the day before yesterday.

And considering the distance between the capital and the Wortenia peninsula, The letter arrived quite early.

Since the essence of the letter was confidential, the messenger must have been running while changing horses in various places.

“I’m not feeling surprised since the boy has warned me about it, but as expected, I can’t laugh it off either...”

Lione said those words, while she smiles bitterly.

Everyone in the same room thought the same thing as her, and the color of discomfort appeared on everyone's faces.

Only Mikoshiba Ryouma showed a gentle smile.

“This is quite troubling indeed, right when our city expansion has been going well...”

Genou muttered those words while smiling at the noise that came in from the windows.

“Indeed. However, We have no other choice but to go. It was pleasing enough that she actually called us. Since there is also the possibility that we won't get involved because she hasn't made her mind yet on whether or not to involve the friend she cast away.”



Ryouma smiled while saying those words.

Everyone in the room nodded in response to those words.

It was easy for them to reject the request just by giving some reason, but given the subsequent result, it was not that easy.

The Kingdom of Rozeria was about to sink.

That was a fact with no room of denial.

The power structure Lupis had aimed only created a negative impact due to her lack of determination.

Certainly, if one were to consider that she was a royal member that had been deprived of the real power for a long time, it was understandable that she wanted to concentrate the power around her.

However, the problem was Lupis Rozerianuz's personality.

(It's not like she is bad... Actually, she is a good person. Her brain is also there. She has adequate knowledge too. And because she can show consideration to the people, in theory, she should have been a good monarch.)

Ryouma's evaluation of Lupis was not really bad.

Not to mention, despite the fact they were not without some faults, Meltina and Mikhail were appropriate aides.

Both have loyalty toward the royal family that can be regarded as first-class.

At least they cannot be incompetent.

(In the end, the biggest problem for me is doing something that I do not know the situation yet...)

There were words in the book of "The art of war" written by Sun Tzu.

Those words were "Know your enemy, know yourself, and you will never lose a battle"

Even people who didn't know Sun Tzu's "The art of war, they should at least have heard of those words at least once in their lifetime, but actually, there was a continuation of it.

If you know your enemy and know yourself, you will obtain victory.

If you do not know your enemy and you do not know yourself, every time you fight, you will clearly be in a danger.

What did those words mean, many still argue, but the one most agree on was to gather intelligence before advancing to the battlefield.

And also the need to know about your own self.

Knowing yourself and the opponent you fight against made you able to see if there was the possibility of winning.

if you're able to judge whether or not the possibility of winning existed, you will easily win battles.

You also can avoid fighting if you know that the chance of winning was not present in advance.

Following those words, one should never fight if one did not know the power of the enemy and were still unable to understand oneself.

Because if one were to fight with such conditions, the only result would be a total loss in every fight.

The most important things were to know oneself.

Understand one's advantages over the enemy.

Find any weakness within oneself.

And to understand them.

Had Lupis understood her own shortcomings, she wouldn't have made this kind of political system where everything was centered around her.

The ruler's duties were to decide on various important things, but because her heart was too gentle and kind-hearted, she lacks determination when she needs to make a harsh decision.

Ryouma himself believes that Lupis should have introduced a council system, and after strengthening the powers of the prime ministers and ministers Lupis would have had a good form of government where she makes a decision based on the ministers'

suggestion.

Of course, there was also the possibility of sabotage by Gerhardt, but if she holds the entire authority of the military, she should have no problems.

In actuality, had Lupis consulted with Ryouma after the war without any extra plotting, he would have said that.

“I don't really want to get involved, but as expected, we have no choice but to go huh? I'm honestly reluctant to accept this...”

She was using a light tone as usual, but Lione's eyes looked serious.

Considering her, no one can help it if she did not want to get involved in this affair.

After all, Bolts and her were the ones who took charge of the training of the children.

In case of a war, it would place those children lives at a great risk.

Had it been for the sake of the city of Sirius, Lione would have ordered them to fight to the death

However, it would be hard to convince them to die for this worthless Rozeria Kingdom.

“Although Lione-san is not wrong, I still cannot refuse this summon. Though, I have no intention of doing this for the Rozeria Kingdom or Lupis. This is for the sake of our survival and to expand our power beyond what we have right now.”

“To oppose the Ortomea Empire is it?”

Ryouma nodded toward Genou's question.

“If Zalda were to be destroyed, the next one will be Rozeria. Given the national land and strength, the three eastern countries can oppose the Ortomea Empire together. But if it was only two countries then...”

“It would be impossible...”

Lione said those words bitterly.

It did not mean she did not understand the current situation.

She just can't accept that due to the current situation they ended up helping Lupis once again.

“Well, I guess that’s how it went... Besides, I'm planning on taking full advantage of this and pull us forward...”

Ryouma replied while shrugging his shoulders.

“Advantage? Pull us forward?”

Lione turned her eyes toward Ryouma after she heard such a strange word mixed in.

“Well, the shape of the city has come to light, thus I’d like to proceed with full development of the Wortenia peninsula. More specifically we need farmers and migrants with special skills. After that, we also need civil servants...”

“If that’s the case, we're not in the position to sent reinforcements huh?”

“Indeed, but you know, no matter what we do, we can't increase the population with slaves alone. No matter how big the saucer is if there is no content to put inside then it would be meaningless no?”

“That might be true... Since the maintenance of the road and the building of house are fairly easy, we can accept any people anytime, but...”

Confusion mixed within Bolts' words.

Indeed, besides people from the Iga clan, only the slave children and mercenaries lived inside this Sirius city.

Mercenaries, soldiers, the ninja and their family members.

Among the ninja people, there were some people who have blacksmith knowledge, thus it was not a problem when it came to repairing a weapon, but this city was still a homogeneous city with only soldiers but without merchant and farmers.

The only exception to that were the few maids sent by Earl Salzberg.

Of course, Bolts himself didn't think that it was good to stay like this forever either.

Since, in any case, it would be impossible to take taxes unless they develop the industry and cultivate the farmland.

‘However, how are they going to do it?’

That is what was inside Bolts' mind.

“If it's now, even if they are cautious with our power growth, they will, without doubt, accept the conditions even if it was a bit unreasonable...”

Farmers aside, no rulers would easily let their engineers leave their territory.

Techniques and technology cannot be learned overnight, that was why they were being closely kept secret.

It would cost a great fortune just to get them.

Since there won't be people who are going to give rivals advantage without profits.

However, with the current situation, people might accept the conditions no matter how unreasonable it was.

No, rather, for Lupis, she would easily accept it rather than having to pay for it with gold or territory.

“I see... We're taking advantage of the situation and at the same time develop the peninsula at once.”

For Ryouma, Lupis was just a prey.

As a stepping stone for him to take a leap.

“Since the invitation already presented itself. Why don't we take advantage of it huh?”

Toward Lione's murmur, Ryouma laughed while showing a smile.

And with a smile on his face, he turned his face toward a certain man.

“Nelsios-san. Do you have any input?”

Toward Ryouma's question, a perplexed expression appeared on the man's face.

The man had a slender but muscular body.

Golden eyes, with bluish black skin.

The light of the sun made his silver hair shine more.

He had a face where if someone was asked how he looked, they would answer it with 'he is a pretty boy'

“Why, did you call me to this place?”

A low and calm voice.

His appearance was around thirty, but his voice made him sound like he was an elderly man.

“Is there a problem?”

Toward Ryouma's question, Nelsios quietly shook his head.

“No... But certainly, this causes me to wonder. Why did you invite me, a demi-human to this meeting?”

Nelsios was obviously confused.

Inside this place gathered people who would one day become the core of Baron Mikoshiba's household

Within those gathered people, only one looked different.

He was just a stranger that had nothing to do with Baron Mikoshiba.

At least, that was what he had thought.

“Well now, don't worry about it too much. For now, what's important is for Nelsios-san to appear at this meeting.”

“Ha? What does that mean?”



Nelsios tilted his head after he heard Ryouma explanation.

He was not being asked of opinion.

He was not asked to provide aid or other supplies either.

He was just asked to come and listen to their discussion.

It was an unexpected development for Nelsios since he had thought that Ryouma would make some request by now.

Ryouma smiled and looking straight at Nelsios who looked back at him suspiciously.

“Well, sooner or later I guess...”

The meeting ended with Ryouma saying those words.



(Such a strange man. His behavior did not show any fear of us. Besides, why did he called for me in the first place?)

Nelsios remembered the previous meeting while he was heading toward the house he had used for lodging since a few days ago.

(But not just that man alone...)

Everyone inside the room did not show any disgust toward Nelsios.

Despite the fact that he was a demi-human.

Although he had vaguely felt it since they started their relationship a few months ago, these people did not hold any prejudice towards demi-humans.

They talked with each other over drinks and eat.

But somewhere within his heart, Nelsios still cannot trust these people.

It was certain that Nelsios felt disappointment when he was being told to attend the meeting this morning.

'I guess he was just a human too.' That was what was inside Nelsios mind at that time.

However, Ryouma just smiled at him today.

The knowledge of magic arts that the elves and the dark elves had.

Treasures that had been treated as a lost treasure since a long time ago.

In addition, the elves were naturally gifted with power equal to that of a knight.

They possessed a strong power.

But at that day, that was not what Mikoshiba Ryouma had wanted.

He did not ask Nelsios to provide technology or to dispatch any soldiers.

In exchange for the girls Ryouma had saved from the pirates, he had only demanded him to visit Sirius city once every half a month.

At first, Nelsios just came without expecting anything.

Even when Ryouma spoke to him, he only answered mechanically.

However, as the meeting repeated several times, they started telling each other jokes, exchange some discussion and eat together.

The exchange they had arranged for once every half a month had only become a form.

Recently, Ryouma had provided Nelsios and his people with accommodation such as houses, and several of his people had been staying in this town since.

Among the clan, they were the youngsters, no older than 200 years old, they did know the history of human persecution, but none actually experienced those things.

It was the story of 400 years ago when demi-humans had lost their dignity and existence by clashing swords against humanity.

Of course, among the demi-humans tribes, many held hostility toward the humans.

The resentment when their family were killed by the humans and their beautiful hometown being destroyed.

Some even called Nelsios as a coward for getting close to the humans.

(I see... He invited me there because he wanted to show me huh...)

When Nelsios realized it, he groaned unintentionally.

(We do not intend to conceal anything. Is that what he wanted to convey?)

That was the way Mikoshiba Ryouma said he believed the demi-humans.

He did not speak of it with words, but with his attitude.

Nelson began to return back.

He thought he cannot let that man have his way as he expected it.

If it was reasonable to return resentment with a grudge, it was also reasonable to return a trust with trust.

Because Nelsios was also one of the clan leaders of the proud black elves

He cannot forget the grudges he had against the humans.

However, that was only him.

He also cannot ignore the future that was spread before his eyes.

Perhaps, it might be possible to return to the olden age, which it was told that the humans and the demi-humans once lived together in harmony.

Such thoughts pushed Nelsios back to move forward.

# Chapter 7

## Between Ideal and Reality 1

*Noon, 14th Day, 11 Month, the Year 2813.*

For the first time in over a year, Ryouma visited Pireaus, the capital city of the Rozeria Kingdom.

A first big city after a long absence.

The fortified city of Epiroz boasted an exceptionally large population, but it cannot be compared with how big the royal capital of a kingdom was.

Well, although the city population was not as big as Tokyo or London, this city was still one of the biggest in this world.

“The atmosphere around here is not really good...”

Ryouma had come via the first gate to enter the city.

Although he had said the atmosphere was not good, it did not mean the smell was bad.

Of course if one were to sniff carefully, unpleasant smell from the sewage can be felt but that was the same in every city, and it was not that bad because the road was maintained properly.

There were various things if one were to compare it with the clean sense of a modern people, but this was not a poor environment when one had to consider the technology this world possessed.

But certainly, the atmosphere around the city was heavy.

While surrounded by around 20 soldiers around him, Ryouma advanced toward the Royal castle.

“Somehow don't you think the atmosphere feel restless?”

“The street shops also does not seem to have much activity either.”

Sara and Laura seemed to have sensed the same thing.

They looked around suspiciously.

“The problem is 'what' had happened huh...”

Ryouma's eyes looked straight on the street.

The city where the country had ended a civil war should have been lively.

Streets where it was filled with crowds and vendors being built here and there.

Originally the voice of the shopkeepers trying to attract customers should have reached even where Ryouma was.

It was wrong to say that he did not hear anything, but somehow it felt like the shops' owners have lost all of their enthusiasm.

“Maybe Queen Lupis reign is not very good?”

“I guess so...”

Responding to Sara's question Ryouma glared at the royal castle.

If the government had been going well, the situation won't go this bad.

There was not much change around the main street, but it seemed that the number of people living on the streets had increased.

“Well, Like this it won't be hard for us to gather farmers I think...”

They were people who abandoned their land and homes.

Although it was almost like they had same status as refugees, but it actually have a different meaning: people who lost their own country because of war or religious crackdown were called refugees, but many also called those who lost their home due to economic reason as well.

Well, both were people who lost their homes.

In front of these people, only two roads existed.

One was to be sold as a slave, and the other was to die on the roadside without anyone's care.

Unfortunately, unlike modern society, in this world, there were no such things such as world organization or NGO to help them.

For these people, there might be a great chance for them willingly to migrate to an underdeveloped Wortenia peninsula.

"Queen Lupis is unable to get rid of the troublesome people after all. Particularly those with a dissenting attitude."

"Indeed. Well, it was convenient for us if she ended up like this. But still, just what happened to make it end up worst this fast?"

Just like Laura had pointed out before, Lupis might even be glad to let these homeless people emigrate.

The existence of these homeless people caused a decline in public security.

It was better for her to push these people to the peninsula rather than letting them live within the royal capital.

The problem here was why the number of these people had increased over the past one year.

Of course, bad luck also existed in this world.

There were also people who loved to gamble and live in debts, while there were also people who have lost their homes because they could not work due to illness or injury.

A lot of such human beings existed within the royal capital even a year ago.

However, the number of people sitting in the alley have definitely increased compared to one year ago.

Although there was no war.

And yet the number of such people had increased, there was only one possibility, and that was the government had not functioned properly.

“Probably, the aristocrats had tightened the taxes, or because of bureaucratic corruption...”

There might also be another problem, but the most apparent one might be due to the confusion among the regional aristocracy because Lupis had caused the power to gather around her too much.

It was common for people with a reformist agenda to collide with people who wanted to protect their vested interests.

Either way, this was a proof that Lupis government had not yet gone well.

(This is pretty desolate...)

Looking at the state of the capital of a kingdom, it was not difficult to imagine what kind of rural aristocracy looked like.

If that was the case, another big problem comes up.

The movement of Princess Ladine.

If the political instability continues, a power that wanted to overcome the current situation would arise.

And surely a revolt will happen. Apart from whether or not it would develop into a civil war depend on the government changing.

At the end of the civil war, Ryouma had predicted that the Rozeria kingdom would fall in five years, but apparently, it would be shorter than that.

(I hope the flames of troubles won't reach us, but I guess that's impossible huh?)

However, contrary to Ryouma expectation, even if there was a movement, he had confidence that this reinforcement to Zalda kingdom would still happen.

Wortenia peninsula was part of Rozeria Kingdom, no matter how much it was left apart.

Thus it cannot be said that no matter what happens nothing will happen to the peninsula.

(Well, I will leave the rest to Genou and Bolts.)

After reading Elena's letter, Ryouma had already consulted how to respond to some extent.

Originally Ryouma was going to provide assistance with full reinforcement, but he cannot leave Sirius city empty either.

The current human resource who have to perform domestic administration will be Bolts, who had supported Lione as a second in command for many years.

Ryouma turned his eyes toward Bolts who was looking at the surrounding end of the group.

It seemed like Bolts himself felt unhappy for not being able to go to the battlefield, but Ryouma had regarded his domestic skill highly.

Although he had not received a proper education, he had known the world by experience, thus he can make use of his experience for work.

In this place, where the majority of people were warrior types, someone with internal affairs ability-although not a specialist- was highly valuable.

Ryouma crossed the castle's bridge while chewing the goddess of luck.



“Ryouma-sama... May I have a bit of your time?”

Sara entered the room where Ryouma was guided into and called to him.

She made sure that no one was around.

It seemed that she didn't want anyone to hear what she was about to say.

“Oh? What's wrong?”

Ryouma looked at her while smiling.

“No, it's nothing... It's just, Ryouma-sama, why did you reject Nelsios-san's offer?”

It was about the meeting of last week.

Nelsios came back and made a proposal that was actually favorable for Ryouma.

Specifically, it was about the matter of synchronizing and harmonize the relationship between the elves and the humans, Nelsios suggested to use the young elves as the defense force of the peninsula, but Ryouma ended up refusing it.

Ryouma did not tell anyone about that matter.

Only one person, Sara who happened to have been watching the event on the spot was the only one to know about it, but she was still unable to understand, why Ryouma refused such a suggestion.

She had been thinking about it all this time, but was unable to find the answer.

“Oh, is this about last week meeting?”

Ryouma nodded while saying that as if convinced of something.

(Well, she seems to have thought about it herself, but unable to find the answer...)

The appearance of Sara who tried to think hard about it appeared inside Ryouma's mind, immediately after that he broke into a grin.

“What Sara is curious about are the reasons as to why I rejected Nelsios-san proposal right? And also, why I did not tell anyone about it, yes?”

“That's right.”

For Sara who was at the site at that time, the proposal was very favorable for Ryouma.

The proposal where the young elves would move to Sirius city to help guard the city. They would be able to provide elvish technology as well, which in turn would have been a great help for Ryouma.

In particular, the idea of moving the young elves to Sirius city would have been very attractive to realize Ryouma's dream.

In fact, everyone knew, that Ryouma had a dream of harmonizing the relationship between the humans and the demi-humans once more.

Had Ryouma not have such intentions, he would have tried to eliminate them.

Just like how he destroyed the pirates.

That was why Sara could not understand why Ryouma refused Nelsios offer at that time.

Although she said refused, Ryouma didn't directly refuse Nelsios, Ryouma told him that he wanted to hear Lione, Laura, and the others opinion first.

"It's simple. That was Nelsios-san testing me."

Toward Ryouma who said those words as if it was nothing, Sara could not hide her surprise.

"A test, is it?"

"That was, you know, he tried to find out how serious I'm as a person who wants to harmonize the relationship between the humans and the demi-humans. Does Sara know the reason why I invited Nelsios-san all this time?"

Toward Ryouma's question, Sara hesitated and began to talk about her thought.

"To harmonize the relationship between the humans and the demi-humans... And to communicate such intention?"

Ryouma nodded deeply toward Sara's answer.

She surely understood Ryouma intention.

"However, if that is the case, then Nelsios proposal would have been perfect is it not?"

"Certainly... However, if we're late in figuring out something, we might end up in trouble."

"End up in trouble, is it?"

Ryouma quietly nodded while showing a bitter smile.

(Well, I guess she could not yet understand it...)

It might be because of the difference in experience.

Or was it the difference in talent?

Either way, such ability was necessary for a ruler.

And Lupis also lost everything because she could not understand about this matters.

“Well, the answer is simple. Indeed we do not have any repulsion against the demi-humans. However, that is if we talked only about us. It is impossible to predict what the farmers who were going to migrate into Wortenia peninsula thought about it. Am I wrong?”

“Light God religious believers...”

After she heard Ryouma's explanation, everything began to connect.

(I see, come to think of it, my sister and I had come from the central continent, thus we did not care about it too much, while most of the people under Ryouma are mercenaries and slaves. We do not believe in the Light God Meneoz so strictly. However, that was not the case if we talk about the farmers that are going to migrate...)

The Holy City Meneoz, the stronghold of the Light God religious organization was located in between the southern kingdoms and Kirtantia Empire.

Although the distance was far, and the faith of the people in western continent eastern and northern part was relatively gentle, the degree of the faith between individuals varied, if one were to make the wrong move, it might even cause an armed uprising.

Of course, since it was an uprising caused by commoners, it would have been easy to crush them, but the opinion among the demi-humans about the humans would have without a doubt turned to the worst.

“Besides, Nelsios-san's suggestion is actually impossible. That man might be one of

the clan's leaders, but he was no dictator. There's no way that the whole clan would move by his thoughts alone.”

Nelsios was certainly an influential person, but no matter what nation one ruled, it was difficult to move soldiers with an arbitrary power alone.

Besides, one cannot dispel the history of human persecution so easily.

“Nelsios-san individual sentiment aside, among the demi-humans there exist those who are unable to forget the hatred they had for the humans. Of course, that was also include us.”

“I see, then Nelsios-san suggestion was...”

“He tried to find out, whether or not I could see the reality. Even though the ideal is being recognized, it does not mean I have the qualification to realize it, no? Had I jumped to Nelsios suggestion right there and then, he might never believe in me ever again.”

A quiet smile appeared on Ryouma's face while he said those words, and cold sweat run down Sara's back.

(What does this person's eyes see, I wonder? The far away ideals? Or the close reality?)

Such thought appeared inside Sara's mind.

# Chapter 8

## Between Ideal and Reality 2

*Noon, 14th Day, 11th Month, the Year 2813.*

A heavy atmosphere covered the audience room.

The color of tension appeared on the face of the guarding knights who had lined up on the left and right.

Such an attitude was natural.

Because the hero who had ended the civil war, and the ruler who tried to get rid of such a hero will face each other after a long time.

The guards, and the civil servants. And also the major nobles.

Everyone's line of sight was looking at the kneeling man waiting for the Queen to enter the room.

"Long time no see Baron Mikoshiba. Raise your head."

When Ryouma was still kneeling down in front of the throne, Lupis voice echoed from the top of his head.

Meltina who was standing on her side, looked at him with a sharp gaze.

This Meltina was the same as the one whom Ryouma had seen during their first meeting.

"Indeed it has been a long time. Your Majesty."



As per Lupis order, Ryouma lifted his face, showing a gentle smile.

On his face, neither hatred, anger or disdain towards Lupis could be seen.

It was a perfectly aristocratic expression.

And a gentle smile that looks good.

Looking at him, the atmosphere inside the audience room relaxed.

Although it was not something made public, the upper part of the aristocracy understood the feud between Queen Lupis and Mikoshiba Ryouma.

They were worried that this talk would end up with an assassination attempt, but it unexpectedly began with a gentle start.

It was no surprise if they all ended up stroking their chest feeling relieved.

But in the next moment, their face became stiff once again, when Lupis spoke.

“I think the situation was written in Elena's letter, but let me say it straight. I would like for you to participate in the reinforcement mission to help Zalda Kingdom, together with Elena.”

They all thought that the two would talk for a bit before beginning this kind of talk.

After all, this was kind of history in the making.

They all thought that the two would talk for a bit to amend their relationship and relax the atmosphere first, but Lupis seemed to think differently.

She chooses to be straightforward.

Perhaps it was not something favorable for the nobles who value formality, but on the other hand, it left a good impression in the eyes of Ryouma who did not like such pointless formality.

Ryouma answered with a firm voice and a gentle smile on his face, while everyone looking at the two's exchange was left with a stiff expression.

“I will accept the order.”

A stir happened after everyone heard Ryouma's reply.

Certainly, those who knew Mikoshiba Ryouma would not believe the sight in front of them.

His personality aside, it was only one year and a few months that had passed since he had been given Wortenia peninsula as his territory. An uncharted territory abandoned by the kingdom for many years. It was a territory with no citizen to pay taxes.

In a practical matter, after being given such a land, there was no way for him to store up the power to gather soldiers in such a short amount of time.

Naturally, most people present in the audience room thought that Ryouma would refuse Lupis order.

Only a handful of people who knew Mikoshiba Ryouma could think the other way around.

“However, I have several requests.”

Following Ryouma's words, a stir happened once again.

(Well, I guess this is natural...)

Lupis quietly nodded, urging Ryouma to continue.

She was calm on the surface, but she had prepared herself in case he refuses her order.

Yet on the contrary, her order was being accepted plainly, but the man in front of her was not that naive.

He was a man possessing a wizened face with a gentle smile that looked good.

Although his physique was good, his overall look was kind of mediocre.

But, Lupis knows this all too well.

That the man in front of her eyes was actually a beast that could devour anything.

It was only over a year ago, when Gerhardt brought princess Ladine, the illegitimate child of the previous king.

And the knight order who was originally the shield and spear of the royal family, 80% of it was being controlled by General Hodram, were pitted against each others.

While she could only rely on Mikhail Banashu and Meltina Lecta who were her guards and aides since a long time ago.

Then at that time, the man appeared in a situation when even a hope of light could not be seen.

He was the man that in order to create a beachhead, had drowned thousands of enemy soldiers, and since afterwards, he was hailed as the 'Demon of Irachion'

Brutal, cruel and cunning... A man who will take any means necessary to achieve his goals.

However, on the other hand, he was also a sincere man who respected Lupis.

At least he was a man that can be believed more than the fickle nobles.

(Yet despite all that, I betrayed this man...)

Indeed, on the surface, for the reward of his service during the civil war, he was given the Wortenia territory and also a noble rank.

However, Lupis herself knew that her act was actually out of fear towards the man in front of her.

There was neither hospitality nor kindness when the Kingdom gave him the frontier territory, the without-revenue Wortenia peninsula.

Such a thing was an open secret among the ruling class within the Rozeria Kingdom.

“Try to say it...”

Lupis said those words while preparing herself.

She had already made her decision.

That was why she was planning on taking full responsibility.

Lupis had decided to take any conditions for the sake of protecting her country.

No matter how painful the requested terms were, she planned to accept it.

Because there was no other way to protect the country.



That night, Ryouma received a visit from Elena inside the room assigned to him. Sitting down on the sofa, the two gazed at each other.

“It was a quicker reunion than I thought...”

Elena looked at Ryouma's face with a gentle smile on her face like a mother would.

“Indeed. I'm also feeling surprised by this situation.”

The lamp placed on top of the table illuminates Elena's face.

(She looked a little bit thinner since the last time I saw her.)

While responding to Elena's talk lightly, Ryouma eyes were directed toward Elena's face.

When he saw her during the audience, he did not notice it because of the distance, but it seemed like she had been working hard; she looked tired.

“Did my advice end up being a waste?”

It was about the advice Ryouma told Elena before they parted ways over a year ago.  
<TLN: The advice that the kingdom would fall within 5 years, and that she should find a new life somewhere>

“Well, I can understand why you did that. I myself never thought the situation would deteriorate this much, to be honest... At first, I wasn't sure how to say this to Elena-san...”

Ryouma told her his thoughts without hiding anything.

It was Ryouma who supported Elena in her current position, and in regards for giving the chance of performing pay-back revenge on Hodram and his family.

It was inevitable for her to take some kind of responsibility despite the ship called the

Rozeria Kingdom had almost sunk.

Such thoughts appeared on the back of Ryouma's mind.

“As expected... At that time, we should've executed Gerhardt.”

Ryouma shook his head towards Elena who uttered those words with a sigh.

“If I'm to look at the current situation, even if we abandoned Mikhail and executed Gerhardt at that time, it would not have made much difference.”

“You mean that she is unqualified as a ruler?”

Elena narrowed her eyes and looked at Ryouma's face.

Those words can be regarded as slander towards the ruler.

“I won't say that she's disqualified, but it is true that she's not suitable for the job. Well, if she were to have someone capable who can be trusted to hold the real power, and she comes to be a symbolic existence, then results would have differed considerably.”

Towards Ryouma's answer Elena's eyes lost its sharpness, and sadness begins to surface on her face.

Regrets.

That was what Elena felt.

“I guess you're right... Certainly, that would be best for this country and her highness Lupis too. If only, someone like you supported her...”

It was a nonsense imagination.

Although he had helped during the civil war, Ryouma was not a citizen of the Rozeria Kingdom. There was strong opposition from the aristocrats and senior knights in this country to give him more pedigrees.

While they have their individual pride as nobles and knights, they all have a similar high-handed thought pattern when it comes to commoners.

Nevertheless, if he was a Rozeria citizen, they would have consented.

Even if they did so reluctantly.

However, Ryouma was different.

Not only was he not a citizen of Rozeria Kingdom, he was also a mercenary with a dubious background.

The reason why they accepted Ryouma as a noble with a baron rank, was because it had been done for the purpose of keeping the troublesome person away until it died, it was a story that no one was going to question loudly.

The Wortenia peninsula was also a special territory, that was why everyone accepted it to be given to him. Had it been a normal circumstance, such a thing would be impossible.

Being thrown into such territory, Mikoshiba Ryouma would not be able to engage in the country's administration.

Of course, Elena was also a commoner, but in her case, she was given her current position because of the achievements she had gained over many years while also being the citizen of the country.

The nickname she had also spread to the surrounding countries and became some kind of national pride.

Her situation was far too different compared to Ryouma.

And the biggest reason was that Lupis herself pushed Ryouma away.

With all those conditions, Elena's dream was a dream that could not exist.

But still, Elena felt regrettable.

'If only... '

Such words binded Elena's heart.

“Well, let's leave such story aside...”

Elena tightens her expression while she looked at Ryouma.

An assumption was no more than a hypothesis after all.

No matter how much she regrets it, the situation won't change.

(Right now, there's no other choice but to do what I can...)

Indeed, she was right, because right now, another nation had begun to bare its fangs towards the Rozeria Kingdom.

# Chapter 9

## Between Ideal and Reality 3

*Night, 14th Day, 11th Month, the Year 2813.*

“Well then? Why did you want those kind of terms?”

It was about the terms Ryouma had demanded during the meeting this noon.

Lupis had accepted all of them.

It was natural for Lupis to do that because of how she was cornered and also of the urgency.

It can be seen from how Lupis accepted Ryouma's demand promptly without going to go through a meeting with the ministries.

Well, it was also true that Ryouma had kept the terms and conditions at a minimum so that it could be decided promptly, but the other side did not know that.

“Are you suspicious of me, Elena-san?”

Toward Elena's question, Ryouma answered with a smile on his face.

Looking at his face, one can easily say that he had ulterior motives.

However, Elena had her own convictions.

“Suspicion? There's no such a thing. You're thinking too much.”

Towards Elena who spoke with such assertions, Ryouma could not hide his surprise.

“You said you don't have any suspicion, but still you are asking me that kind of question?”

It was a natural objection on his part.

It would have been natural if she asked because she was suspicious of something, but to enquire something yet said not feeling suspicious, it was expected for Ryouma to doubt her.

However, Elena's facial expression did not change.

“Ryouma-kun... What are you planning?”

Her eyes were serious, there were no fluctuations that could be seen from it.

He was convinced that Elena wouldn't pull back if he didn't give her a satisfying answer.

(Geez... Well, I guess it can't be helped for Elena to be like this, huh?)

A bitter smile appeared unintentionally on Ryouma's face.

It was not like he had an ulterior motive or anything like that.

He had done so to increase the chance of winning even if it was just a little.

Since in a battlefield, he would be dead if he did not do his best.

And with the current army Ryouma had, he won't be able to influence the battlefield very much.

How can hundreds of troops influence a battlefield where countries collide.

What it can do was only to deal a death blow if there were some gap. That was what he was in the process of doing.

The protagonists in this war would be the knight order led by Elena and the reinforcements from the Mist Kingdom

It was also true that he did so he could lessen the burden Elena had carried.

However, he could only provide a little advantage for them.

It was a cheap price despite the advantages they get.

(I guess I have no choice. It would be tasteless of me if I make Elena feel suspicious here...)

Ryouma quietly thought of that and heave a sigh.

“Is this about the matter of war funds?”

He had asked the permission to migrate homeless people from the royal capital and the surrounding territory, as well as one month time period to prepare for participating in the reinforcement.

The emigration of engineers seemed to be a little of a bottleneck, but even that much won't cause too much noise.

The departure of engineers might cause the security of the kingdom to worsen but it was not something to be too concerned about, and even the time needed for Ryouma to prepare for the reinforcement was especially short, which can only be regarded as a good news.

Which only left one problem that concerned Elena, it was about the 50 million baht he had demanded Lupis to give him as war funds.

“Didn't you say that you're going to prepare the war supplies by yourself?”

Elena directed her investigative eyes toward Ryouma.

The amount of war funds was unnaturally too small.

Elena understood that Ryouma needed funds for the development of the Wortenia peninsula, but it would have been good if he had said so honestly.

Everyone knew that the order for reinforcement was unreasonable.

And nobody would have complained if Ryouma asked aid for the peninsula development in exchange for his participation.

There was no need for him to name it war funds in this kind of situation.

“Well sure I wanted to do that, but after I saw the condition of the royal capital, I'm not sure if I should've asked that...”

“What do you mean by that?”

“It means just like what I said. Her Majesty does not seem to be able to control the

kingdom. I guess she is already on her knees? That is why, I don't think she would be able to manage the supply when the country is under such conditions, no?"

Towards Ryouma's explanation, Elena's face grew stiff.

"Although all of this was not because of her direct fault either, but well..."

Towards Ryouma who ends his words with a chuckle while shrugging his shoulders, Elena felt a cold chill run down her spine.

(This kid... He is capable of grasping the conditions of the kingdom just by looking at the situation in the royal capital?)

Certainly, Lupis reforms had never been successful.

Or rather, it can be said that she had faced much frustrations.

Originally, Lupis was someone who led the knight order she had minimal contact with bureaucrats and nobles.

As a result, when Lupis centralized the power within the throne, it caused a big opposition from the bureaucrats and aristocrats due to the limitation it had imposed on their power.

In their eyes, a political neophyte had invaded their territory using the throne as an excuse.

That was the image the aristocrats had towards Lupis.

Had Gerhardt ended up dead, they might have given up, but Gerhardt who managed to establish connections and backing with the royal family thanks to Ladine, despite having his rank demoted into a viscount, is now stronger in terms of political power.

Although the ministerial level had been changed.

Despite having Earl Bergston and Zereff, nobles who were bystanders and had nothing to do with Gerhardt, taking the office.

The lower bureaucrats had been serving Gerhardt from the time he held the real power.

With them being uncooperative, the nation could not move well.

The truth was that since it had been decided they would send reinforcements, the order to gather supply such as weapons and foods had been released, yet they only managed to assemble two-thirds of the intended amount.

Of course, the reinforcement party can get supplies from the Zalda Kingdom, but they could not let everything be done by Zalda either.

Since Ryouma and the others would go as reinforcements, they could not loot the Zalda Kingdom territory either, thus it was natural for him and the others to prepare some amount themselves.

All that being said, Mist Kingdom as well, behind their majestic knight orders, they also brought a lot of supplies.

Not only medical and food supplies, they also brought with them spare armors, weapons, and horses.

“Ryouma-kun... You're...”

Elena was at a loss for words.

The young man in front of her, despite being young already knew this much about the military.

An army was equal to a huge monster.

It was a beast that produces nothing, only eating a huge amount of supplies.

And when such supplies run short, the creatures called troops would begin to desert.

However, few people understood that basic principle.

Even in the military personnel, other than some senior officers, most of them could not grasp such concept.

But even with his answer, another question appeared inside Elena's mind.

(This boy... From where the hell was he going to procure the supplies then?)

Certainly, supplies were important. Therefore, she understood why he had asked the war funds.

But, no matter how much money one possessed, there were no points unless one finds someone to sell the goods.

And the number of goods the military needed was always beyond comprehension.

One knight order led by Elena, and the hundreds of soldiers led by Ryouma. Although the number was less than three thousand, they still could not gather the supplies needed for them from a small shop in the city.

It was usually handled by a firm that was used to huge procurements, but those firms would not easily take an order from a first-time customer.

If there were no arrangements beforehand, those firms wouldn't undertake the contract.

That was because such huge procurement carried a high risk when it failed.

"Don't worry. To be honest, I've already made the arrangements. We can pay the money afterwards."

"Huh?"

Ryouma speak of Elena's worries as if it was nothing big.

"I've already talked with a firm from Epiroz city. Well, in that regard, I was lucky. Anyway, in short, we already secured the supplies for the next six months."

"I see, so that was why you only need one month..."

The young man with a gentle smile on his face had come to the royal capital with all preparations in mind.

One could easily see that he had already thought of the possibility of being called beforehand.

By Ryouma's own free will, he was actually going to help the kingdom.

In itself that was something to be happy about.

But, considering his past actions, such a thing was incredibly unlikely to happen.

(From when did he... No, that is wrong... The right one would be, what does he do all of this for?)

Elena did not ask Ryouma the question that appeared inside her heart.

Because she felt everything would collapse the moment she asked the question.

# Chapter 10

## To the West 1

*Noon, 17th Day, 12 Month, the Year 2813.*

A group of soldiers camped in the plain on the outskirts of Epiroz.

The soldiers numbered around 300 people.

In addition, approximately around 100 men in poor clothes sat down on the ground.

The soldiers who wore black leather armor gave sharp eyes toward the surroundings that did not match the young face they had.

A fluttering flag with a black background raised in the campsite, was blown by the wind.

The design on the surface of the flag was a double-edged sword with two snakes coiling around it. The red eyes of those snakes gave off a mysterious light.

The flag that was swayed by the wind felt very intimidating to the surroundings.

But, everyone in the camp was very proud of that flag.

The sword symbolized power. And the two snakes , that twined around the sword symbolized stratagem and political maneuvering.

That design was the exact embodiment of their master, it was also a testimony to the new country that they had built together with their own hands.

“Salted Fish, forty barrels.”

“Dried Dates, fifty barrels.”

“Dried pig meat, fifty barrels.”

Voices of soldiers could be heard in sequences near the wagon that had been brought to the campsite.

“It might be a hassle, but please open the lid and check the contents one by one.”



After the soldiers received Laura's instruction, they began working once again.

At the same time, confirming the soldiers' words, a good-looking merchant checked the parchments in his hand in a hurry.

"I guess this is everything... Geez, Earl Salzberg's recommendation aside, it was truly hard to gather this amount with such a short-time notice, you know?"

Having finished to check all the goods, the merchant greatly sighed.

Ten wagons of goods were brought by this merchant to the campsite.

They then began checking the goods one by one matching the register.

It was natural for him that fatigue could be seen from his expression.

Still, after two hours of work, a smile finally appeared on his whole face.

"I did add an extra payment because of that, no? And in addition to that, isn't this all being sold above the market price?"

Laura turned her cold eyes toward the merchant who complained while he kept his eyes on the parchments.

As a result of the inspection, there were no problems when it came to the number of items or their quality, but the amount in the invoice delivered to Laura was too high.

As a matter of fact, the merchants were enthusiastic about today's business, because their opponents were someone unprepared.

That also showed how experienced they were when it came to negotiation with an unskillful noble.

They aimed at such opportunities with eagle eyes, just so they could increase the profits even a tiny bit more.

Even in front of Laura, the merchant continued showing a good smile while looking at the parchments in his hands. She could not let her guard down just because the good-looking merchant appeared to be a sincere man.

"Please don't joke like that. These all are the same prices Earl Salzberg usually pay us..."

The merchant protested while looking vexed.

Mentioning the Earl's name here showed how sly this merchant was.

Certainly, once he had mentioned the Earl's name, the aristocrats who had ranks below him wouldn't be able to protest.

They won't be able to protest because the aristocrats with lower ranks did not want the Earl to have a bad impression toward them.

Thus such fear caused them to be unable to protest against the merchant.

The goods brought by this man were food that could be preserved, such as dried meat and fish.

Although it was true that the items were hard to gather because they were items that are consumed on a daily basis by ordinary people, but in much greater quantity, Laura still could not accept the amount in the invoice that the merchant just gave her.

Because it was a little bit of an unreasonable demand, Ryouma had already told Laura to pay silently if it was 10% higher than the market prices, but as expected, a 30% increase was too much.

Ryouma had conducted a market survey in advance and honestly bought some from the smaller shops who dealt with the household.

Thus, he could easily determine the appropriate prices for all the items.

Ryouma was not naive enough to easily accept the merchant's words.

“Is that so? Then you can take all of this back. We can just purchase the goods from another company.”

Laura told the merchant to take the goods back home without hesitation.

Ryouma certainly needed supplies, but there was still a limit to everything.

This was one of those things where he could not compromise with.

“Wha?! That would be unreasonable. We had arranged the items despite them being impossible to gather, only because of the Earl's recommendation. If we bring them all

back home like this... your relationship with the Earl would turn bad, you know?"

The merchant seemed to have seen Laura as a naive girl. He threatened her while mentioning the Earl's name.

Indeed, this method would have been effective if it was the usual, but right now, he will regret his own words.

"What's going on?"

"What?!"

After the merchant said those words, Earl Salzberg appeared while being protected by his guards.

One could guess that he had arrived since a while ago.

The merchant's mouth trembled looking at him.

"Oh my, Earl Salzberg-sama. pardon my rudeness, welcome to our camp."

Laura showed respect for the Earl with a perfect movement.

"Umu. Since Mikoshiba-dono is going for an expedition, I'm thinking of saying goodbye personally. I did not send a messenger beforehand, but is the time alright?"

With a happy smile on his face, Earl Salzberg asked Laura.

"Although we're busy preparing everything, toward the Earl who gave us consideration in various things, how can we say no?"

"Is that so? Then, please guide me."

After saying that, The Earl directed his eyes toward the merchant.

"You're one from Rafiel firm right?"

Earl Salzberg didn't particularly raised his voice, but the merchant's expression changed as if he was sentenced to death.

It was the words of a feudal lord who also married the daughter of a firm's chairman and had Epiroz business alliance within his grasp.

For this merchant, the Earl's words were equal to that of an oracle from God.

"Mikoshiba-dono worked hard for the sake of the Rozeria Kingdom. How about you think about that a little?"

The Earl himself did not order the merchant to do something in particular.

However, the merchant was not a fool and he knew the real meaning behind the Earl's words.

"O-Oh, it was very rude of me. It seems like we've made some mistake here..."

The merchant did not say anything about giving a discount openly, but it was obvious that he was going to do just so.

And Earl Salzberg didn't say anything more.

Since the merchant seemed to understand what his words meant.

"Umu, I've forced an unreasonable demand to the association, but this is all for the sake of the country. I'm counting on you."

"Yes. I'm sorry for my mistake. We will redo the calculation immediately."

Perhaps after the calculation being redone a few more times, he was going to make an excuse that there was some mistakes in the previous estimate.

(That was bad luck for him.)

While she laughed within her heart, Laura gazed at the merchant who began checking the goods with sweat on his face.

In her eyes, because the merchants wanted more profits he ended up giving a discount

instead.

Well, since it was also impossible to predict that the Earl was going to show up, it was more than appropriate for him to curse his own luck for this incident.

“Well then, shall we go?”

Earl Salzberg then urged Laura to guide him as if nothing had happened.

Of course, in actuality, for the Earl this was an insignificant accident.

Because it was just about a greedy merchant being reproved.

“Geez, you're too good of a person. No matter how much she implored you to do, to think she asked you to participate in the reinforcement mission. That was very unreasonable of her.”

As soon as Earl Salzberg entered the tent where Ryouma was staying, he immediately spoke those words while smirking.

Hearing his voice and looking at that expression, it was not really a sarcasm on his part.

His behavior gave off a feeling like a friend who spoke of abusive language directed at his friend.

“It has been a while. Earl Salzberg. Thank you for your assistance for this time...”

Immediately after Ryouma gestured Laura to leave, he greeted the Earl without showing any surprise.

“Well, a dull greeting is good too. Since you've made me gain a lot of money this time.”

The Earl stopped Ryouma who was about to lower his head, and in a good mood Earl Salzberg immediately sat down on a nearby chair.

“There is no such a thing. Thanks to Your Excellency, we have gathered enough of the goods that we need.”

“Good then. From now on, let's work together for our mutual benefits.”

Looking at Ryouma who lowered his head in agreement, Earl Salzberg had a satisfying smile on his face.

Well, that would be natural on his part.

Since just merely by having the Mistel firm chairman as his father-in-law, he had managed to make the business alliance to guarantee the number of goods Ryouma needed.

The Earl didn't need to sweat to do it.

At the same time, as an intermediary for the purchase, he had received mediation fee from Ryouma, and the numbers were not that bad either.

Plus, he also should have gotten some kind of rewards from the firms' side as well.

It was unknown as to how much Earl Salzberg made money out of this trade, but it should not be lower than one million baht.

Having Ryouma bringing that much profits for the Earl, he had no intentions of asking Ryouma to show his gratitude toward himself.

As for Ryouma, he precisely knew what kind of human being the Earl was.

Human beings such as the Earl didn't like to act as if he owed a favor.

On the other hand, due to his pride, he will also guarantee a proper return if the other side had taken a respectful approach.

The important thing here was not to harm the opponent's pride.

“By the way, was Elena Steiner already heading toward the Zalda Kingdom?”

With the atmosphere relaxed, Earl Salzberg began to talk about the upcoming war

Because he was originally a military man, he seemed to be more interested in the reinforcement mission.

“Indeed, it would make Zalda and Mist Kingdoms have a bad impression if we delay the reinforcements much longer.”

Of course, it was not a good reason.

But if Rozeria had delayed much longer, Mist Kingdom would declare war against the Rozeria Kingdom because of it.

“Well, that would be obvious. For the Mist Kingdom, the Zalda Kingdom is an important shield after all. I can even say that the Mist Kingdom has quite the patience for waiting for over a year like that.”

“Well, they must already know the situation within the Rozeria Kingdom. I can see that they don't want to pass through Rozeria in a situation where her majesty can't keep the nobles under control.”

“Even if they don't know that, they must have expected the expedition would be difficult if they had to go through an unstable country after all...”

It was fairly difficult for any country to perform a military expedition.

Even just keeping the morale of the soldiers who have to live far from their country was very hard

Furthermore, they also needed to procure supplies.

And also many other concerns that needed to be addressed.

If there was an unstable country where the expedition needed to pass through on top of that, it would be difficult for them to decide whether or not to execute the expedition.

“So, what will you do from here on?”

“We will go west from Epiroz and enter the Zalda territory. Afterwards, we will go south and join with Elena at Zalda's capital city Periveria.”

“I guess, that is a good choice... Afterwards, everything depends on your luck huh?”

Ryouma answered the Earl's words who felt like a tease with a silence.

There was nothing for him to say.

A lucky man would survive, and an unlucky man would die.

No matter the world, that had not changed. <TLN: The Wiseman said "Luck is a skill".>

After the talk, Earl Salzberg who was about to leave with his escort guards turned his eyes toward the flag with a black background.

(Fumu... A sword entwined by snakes huh?... That design really suits that man.)

At least, the snakes certainly represented that man accurately.

(I have no intention of following his schemes but, well, I wonder what's going to happen next.)

He did not trust Ryouma in particular.

However, because Ryouma had given him an advantage, he ended up lending his power a little.

Although they spoke to each other like a friend would do, that was only on the surface.

And both of them understood that.

(If that man can save Zalda, then good. If he fails then at that time we just have to negotiate with the Ortomea Empire together along the other northern aristocrats.)

They were many ways for the nobles to survive if they didn't stick with the survival of their nations.

However, it did not mean that they didn't have any wish of invading Ortomea Empire either.

But, the war cost money.

Even if you did not get involved with it directly.

(I can see that man's intelligence being represented by the snakes... So the sword would be power then? I guess, whether this flag ends up as the truth or just a bluff, it would be a sight worthy to be witnessed.)

A cold smile appeared on the Earl's face.

It was the appearance of a man looking down on someone in a grand manner.

# Chapter 11

## To the West 2

*Evening, 22th Day, 12 Month, the Year 2813.*

Soldiers wearing all-black armor made a long formation and headed toward the south.

Wagons filled with supplies followed behind them.

With a red sunset behind them, they looked like evil spirits that had just came out from the depths of hell.

“Oi! Which noble do those soldiers belong to?”

A middle-aged man looked toward the highway while he was plowing his field to create ridge plants, and asked his wife who was helping him nearby.

Although the reason why he asked the question to his wife was just so he could take a little breather.

The man rubbed his palm, which began to feel numb and turned his eyes toward the highway once again.

In his eyes, unspeakable hatred could be seen.

(No matter what time, what day, every time, it's always war, war, and war. Geez, even though we don't want to have anything to do with the aristocracy...)

Living had become harder and harder every day for the man.

For ordinary commoners, they did not care who they paid their taxes to.

Eventually, they only wanted to be guaranteed a stable life and security.

Right now, the Zalda Kingdom was being attacked by Ortomea Empire and was in danger of falling.

Fortunately, the people who lived in the northeastern part of the Zalda Kingdom were still able to live in peace, although the sparks of the war could already be felt in some areas.

Moreover, while the northeastern part of the kingdom had literally escaped the flames of war, it did not mean they were not being affected by it either.

Domestic prices had been rising since last year, and under the pretext of defending the nation, the feudal lords had been raising the taxation temporarily.

Which meant, life had just become harder.

(But well, compared to the others, I guess I'm still well off huh?...)

The man had his own house and land.

All he had to do was just to pay taxes to the feudal lord.

Compared with the people who borrowed a land from some landlords, they have to pay the landlord and also the taxes to the feudal lord separately.

Inside the man's mind, the neighbour who had sold their own daughter to the slave merchant just to help pay taxes came to mind.

(That girl, she should be around 8 years or so, right?... Damn it.)

She was a cute little girl with clear blue eyes and brown hair.

Their parents also loved her.

That was why that child should not have ended up being sold to the slave merchant.

(Fuck, I hope this all end soon. After all, we have nothing to do with all of those wars.)

He thought that if in the end they were going to lose, then quickly lose instead.

Since because the country had resisted for too long, the war expenses had swollen, and the side effects were being forced on the ordinary people.

Although, he thought that, it didn't mean that he did not think logically.

He thought that because he hated the taxes.

“Ha? What are you saying? Stop slacking around and start working!”

The wife raised her voice after noticing that her husband had stopped plowing.

She was a strong-minded wife.

Which made her the type of woman who put her husband on a short leash.

However, although she said those words toward her husband, she still looked at the highway.

“What is that... Such unpleasant soldiers...”

All black.

From a distance, the soldiers looked all black from the top of their heads to their toes.

“Right, do you know where they come from?”

“I've never seen such soldiers before.”

“I agree, I've never seen such soldiers either. I guess those soldiers are not from the nobles in the vicinity.”

The man murmured those words adding to his wife's answer while silently feeling a shiver down his spine.

It was rare to see an army which had such huge characteristics.

Although the numbers were not that much, it was rare for an aristocrat who made their soldiers wore the same armor with the same color.

Usually the ones who did that kind of thing to their soldiers, were those from the royal family to their royal guards.

“Also, that flag...”

“Are those snakes? Those red eyes really give off an unpleasant feeling...”

A flag with a black background fluttered in the wind.

A sword that was being entwined by two golden snakes were sewn on it.

It was a fairly unique design for a flag.

And at the same time, it was a flag which left a huge impression and was not easy to forget.

“Dear... How about you contact the village chief and the feudal lord?”

Her eyes were shaking as she told her husband so.

“The village chief...”

Certainly, his wife's words were right.

Although right now they still managed to escape from a direct war, the Zalda Kingdom that they belonged to was still in the middle of a war.

It was dangerous to leave alone a military from an unknown origin marching inside the kingdom's territory.

“And if those soldiers pillage the village then...”

The man hold his breath after he heard his wife's words.

Because those words were things he didn't want to hear right now.

Fire set ablaze.

A village full of smoke.

River dyed red from the dead villagers.

And lastly, women and children being sold into slavery.

(Damn it! The battlefield should be in the west! Why are they in this kind of place instead?!)

The homeless citizens who escaped the war had flowed into that village, and depended on several families or relatives.

From their stories, the war should have broken out near their border with Ortomea Empire, located southwest of their kingdom.

The villagers obtained that news recently, thus it was impossible for the enemy soldiers to appear in this northeast highway.

However, the scene that happened in front of them was not a dream either.

“We should go to the village chief immediately to deliver the news...”

Grabbing the trembling hands of his wife, he threw his farm tools away and began running toward the village chief’s house.

He should be able to arrive there faster if he walked through the fields

Although he had accidentally stepped on the ridge plants he had created earlier, such a matter was something trivial right now.

They should be able to hide safely if it was only two people, but they felt concerned about the village where they had lived.

As someone who lived in the same village, villagers thought of each others as a family.

The man began raising his speed while pulling his wife's hand.



“Ryouma-sama... The farmers...”

Laura, while riding her horse, pointed her finger in a certain direction.

Her finger was directed toward the farmers who previously escaped while trampling their own field.

(Geez, those fields ended up getting damaged. Why do they always end up running away, despite the fact that we are reinforcements from a friendly nation...)

Ryouma heaved a sigh after he had seen these scenes far too many times since he left Epiroz.

“Right, we should not mind them... But then, it would be unbearable if we ended up being mistaken as an enemy again...”

Though they were just farmers, if they had raised their hoes and rushed to attack, they could still be a considerable threat.

Although soldiers won't lose against them, some damage would've still occurred.

But even if the farmers attacked, as soldiers who had come for the purpose of reinforcement, they could not attack back, or if they did that, then they would lose their sense of purpose for being there.

Because of these problems Ryouma even forgot the pain on his butt from having been sitting on a horse for too long.

He did not expect the villagers to welcome them, but at least he wanted the villagers to think about his feelings for a bit.

Or at the very least, when a soldier approached them to inform that an army was going to pass by, he hoped that those farmers won't run away instead.

Furthermore, if Ryouma wanted to pass through by dividing his soldiers into small numbers, there was also a chance that his soldiers might end up getting picked apart and destroyed.

Certainly, the northeast area of the Zalda Kingdom was still relatively safe, but one couldn't really predict what may happen in a war.

A few days ago, some feudal lords were almost at the point of taking up arms by creating a mixed army.

The feudal lords seemed to have misunderstood Ryouma's army as enemy soldiers who came to loot their territory.

Ryouma, fortunately, managed to solve the misunderstanding before a disaster could happen, but honestly, he was worried about the situation.



“How long is this going to take?”

“Based on the distance, we are ten days away from reaching the destination... but...”

It was regarding the time needed to travel to Zalda's capital city, Periveria.

The map borrowed from Elena was for military purpose, thus it was very highly accurate.

But of course, because there were no satellites here, it was only accurate when it came to this world standard, and was remarkably different compared to the ones used in the private sector.

While riding the horse, Laura's expression turned cloudy when she opened the map.

“From here on out until we arrive at the royal capital, we will pass through the weak and small nobles territories.”

“That means, there's a chance that our communication will be cut off huh?”

Responding to Laura's words, Ryouma frowned.

Due to the incident the other days, Ryouma had sent messengers to deliver the news that they were reinforcements from the Rozeria Kingdom, but because the situation was as it is during a wartime, the information did not reach some nobles.

And mostly it happened with the small nobles.

These nobles mostly had territory located in a rural area which was far from the highway.

Five days had passed since Ryouma left Epiroz city.

If he tried to calculate, he had already traveled around 200 kilometers.

It was kind of a forced march since Ryouma and his troops had to travel 40 kilometers per day. <TLN: This is highly debatable, but we're talking about tech and facility less than the middle ages here.>

At a speed of 4 kilometers per hour.

With infantrymen walking in a formation, and the logistical troops dealing with the

supplies at the back.

Their marching speed was considerably fast.

But then again, they had come to reinforce the Zalda Kingdom, it would be Ryouma's loss if they ended up being misunderstood as an enemy and lost some soldiers.

"I guess we have no choice... Let's send cavalry to chase after them. Listen alright, absolutely, do not hurt them."

He had come this far, thus he could not afford any strange troubles.

Receiving Ryouma's command, several cavalry knights chased after the people who ran away.

(Maybe, it would have been better for us to go with Elena back then...)

In her case, she could just dispatch an advanced troop to inform the villages and towns to avoid the confusion.

That worked well because she had her own fame.

That was why it was also natural for the villagers to think Ryouma was an enemy if his all-black army passed through without any warning.

He had only one letter written by Lupis as an identification.

And it had only a limited usefulness. <TLN: For example, Zalda aristocrats might know Lupis crest or Rozeria royal crest, but mere villagers from another country?>

(Honestly, this is going to be hard...)

Ryouma lamented his situation once again, then he heaved another sigh.

# Chapter 12

## Proof of Power 1

*Morning, 3rd Day, 1st Month, the Year 2814.*

“Baron-sama, we can finally see it. That is the city of Periveria.”

Following the direction the village girl had pointed, Ryouma saw a grey dot across the plains.

As the group exited the highway, the outline of the grey dot become clear.

It was a solid fortified city surrounded by high walls.

Although it was the same fortified city just like Epiroz, the scale was on a completely different level.

“Ah! Father.”

The village girl who saw her father waiting for her near the city's gate looked happy.

They both had been separated for a few days, which made her behavior seemed natural, but Ryouma could not help but smiled bitterly.

After all, the village girl who was supposedly already an adult, reacted rather childishly.

(I did pay attention to her carefully. But well, I guess it can't be helped...)

It seemed that the Marfisto sisters, who rode beside Ryouma also felt the same way.

They felt that perhaps the behavior of the village girl was a sign of anxiety and fear.

For some money, they took the job of guiding Ryouma and the others toward Periveria city, and for them these past few days must have been quite intense.

By accepting a job from an army of another country, it could be said that they had taken a gamble, although they did it because of the taxation starting to kill them.

And even if they took the job because Ryouma told them that they were reinforcements from Rozeria, they still did not know if it was true or not.

And what if Ryouma was an enemy of the country disguised as a friend?

If that happened, the villagers would have been executed as traitors toward the motherland.

Even if they insisted that they had been deceived, they would probably be ignored.

Since it would have been easier for the government to execute them to make an example.

And to make the commoners stay in place.

In any case, their lives were at stake.

Even though the villagers did not realize it, they still instinctively felt it.

Nevertheless, taking the job from Ryouma was nothing more than putting the villagers in a danger.

Now when the distance between Ryouma and the welcoming party became shorter, the figures who welcomed them came into view, and Ryouma noticed that some of them frowned their eyebrows.

A frightened expression was engraved on the face of the village girl's father.

Probably noticing her father's expression. Grief can be seen on the village girl's face as well.

(Oho? It seems there's some misunderstanding huh?)

Had the village girl's father been chased by the enemy's soldiers, then he wouldn't be standing there.

Furthermore, there were armored knights following behind him.

(They are Zalda Kingdom's knight, no? Why does he looked frightened like that?)

“Ryouma-sama...”

Ryouma put his hand on Sara's head who looked anxious, and he showed his usual smile.

“It will be fine. Both of you wait here... Understood?”

“Please be careful...”

「亮真様……」

心配そうな視線を向ける  
サーラの頭に軽く手を置き、  
亮真は笑みを浮かべた。

「大丈夫だ」

After nodding his head in response to Laura's words, Ryouma stopped his army and proceeded alone toward the Zalda knights.

After all, if both sides could not grasp the situation, it would be hard to shake hands...

The Zalda Kingdom's knights then split to the sides, and a single knight approached Ryouma while bringing some escort.

Looking at the knight's helmet, that person seemed to be a high ranking one.

And beside him, the knights who guarded him as escorts also wore good equipment.

(Is he a leader of a knight order? Which means, he is a general huh?)

Ryouma eyes narrowed.

(Why did they bother to send a high ranking person just for this? Is this because of how much they had been cornered?)

“Are you the reinforcements from Rozeria?”

As soon as he closed the distance with Ryouma, the man who seemed to have a high ranking position turned his sharp eyes toward Ryouma and asked him the question.

For someone who met each other for the first time, the man's etiquette was kind of lacking.

Or at least, that was not an attitude one should show toward the reinforcements that had come to help.

However, Ryouma quickly lowered his head without showing any anger.

“I'm a Baron of Rozeria Kingdom, my name is Mikoshiba Ryouma. To help in the fight against the crisis that your country currently face, Queen Lupis of Rozeria has dispatched me as part of a reinforcement mission. I would like an audience with Zalda Kingdom's King, Julianus the First, would you inform them?”

Ryouma's etiquette was perfect.

Given that he was a nobleman, his attitude could be said as good.

But, even after Ryouma showed his courtesy, the man in front of him seemed like he didn't care at all.

After he handed over his helmet to one of his men, he turned his sharp gaze toward the direction behind Ryouma.

He was a man with a short blonde hair and at the prime of his life,

If one had to guess his age, it would have been around the early forties.

Although it was a bit vague because he was riding a horse, he seemed to have a large body built.

A man with thick muscles around his body.

One might actually say that he looked more like a gorilla than a person.

“Fuuh... It seems you have less than five hundred with you? What can you do with that small number?”

Words filled with sharp ridicule came out from the man.

It was great that he was a man that was able to guess the number of soldiers with just a quick glance, but his high-handed attitude spoiled everything.

The impression he gave made Ryouma not want to get involved with him too much.

“Does your Queen, Lupis, want to forsake the Kingdom of Zalda? We've sent a lot of reinforcement requests, which ended up being ignored, and now finally, she does send reinforcements, yet the one who came was someone who had retired from the military a long time ago, and a young man who does not know anything. Is she unable to understand the situation properly?”

The man seemed to have no intention of maintaining appearances.

If Mikhail or Meltina heard those words, there would have been an instant war between the Zalda Kingdom and the Rozeria Kingdom.

Since the man's words had insulted Lupis too much.

But for Ryouma who had little to no respect for the Rozeria Kingdom and Lupis, the man's provocation was meaningless.

“As you have guessed, the number of soldiers that I had brought is around 300, and the people who manage the supplies are around 150 people. It is wonderful that you have such keen eyes... You seem to be a high ranking person, but if I may, please do tell me your name?”

“Don't you have anything to say to protect your pride or are you saying that you don't care about what I've said?”

Towards Ryouma who did not show any reaction, the man showed an amazed expression.

(As if I would expose my emotions in public!)

Ryouma silently ridiculed the man's provocation inside his mind

It was important to hide one's feelings from one's opponent.

For the purpose of hiding one's true intention.

That was an important truth Mikoshiba Ryouma had experienced when he was young.

And that truth he had realized during his social life also had value for warfare.

“It is a fact that our country could not reply to your request for a reinforcement a year ago. And it is also the truth that because of the situation in our country, which has not yet recovered,, we only managed to send 3000 soldiers, including the ones Elena-sama led. Thus it was natural for you to have such concerns... As for what we can do, we can only prove our ability on the battlefield.”

“Hoho, If those are your true feelings, then it is quite admirable.”

In response to Ryouma's words, the man seemed to have acknowledged his answer.

Certainly listening to Ryouma's words, his words sounded smart.

“Very well... Elena-dono has already participated in the war council. After you have an audience with his majesty, you also may participate in it as you are...”

Ryouma was not really sure if the man had accepted his answer, but the man's expression

had indeed become more relaxed.

(It means that they have already made arrangements beforehand, huh? Which means that this man attitude earlier was just a test... But well, even if it was not, in my eyes it is natural for them to feel concerned.)

Perhaps, by suddenly insulting him, the man wanted to see Ryouma's attitude.

And from the man's words it seemed that there was already a plan for Ryouma to have an audience with the King, it proved that the insult before was a test.

"Come to think of it, I have not yet introduced myself. I'm Zalda Kingdom's royal guard leader Grahart Henschel. Pleased to meet you."

After he said those words, he turned his horse toward Periveria and began to walk away.

(Now then, what is going to happen after this...)

While staring at the back of Grahart, Ryouma took out the gold coin he had prepared.

It was the payment for the villagers who rolled their eyes unable to grasp the situation.

# Chapter 13

## Proof of Power 2

Afternoon, 3rd Day, 1st Month, the Year 2814, Western Continent Calendar.

Inside a room within the Periveria royal castle, a man and a woman were sitting face-to-face.

One was an elderly woman with a gentle smile.

Boasting unrivaled achievements and capability as a warrior, her atmosphere was relatively calm and warm.

(No matter how much time had passed, this person never changes...)

Grahart muttered such words inside his mind after looking at Elena's appearance when she carried the teacup and drank the tea elegantly.

For Grahart the first time he saw [Rozeria's White Goddess of War] was when he had just enrolled in the knight order.

Many of the knights from back then were fascinated by her friendly personality, but even when she had become old, her charm did not decline.

Human beauty declines with age, but the appeal seemed to have been polished by the passing years.

“So? What do you think? What was your impression when you first met him?”

Toward Grahart who was almost twelve years younger, Elena spoke to him with polite words.

Gerhart himself felt disheartened with such an act because he also considered the difference in experience between the two, but he swallowed such thoughts and floated a bitter smile, since Elena wouldn't change the way she speaks even if he asked her.

“I'm sorry for betraying your expectations but, to be honest, I can't really tell.”

Although he felt a little hesitation, Grahart talked as clearly as possible.

“Indeed, certainly he seems to have a strong self-control, but, the number of soldiers he leads is too small. Thus I do not think that he will affect the war situation too much... Also...”

Grahart stopped talking trying to think better words.

“Also, not only young, many of them are women... am I right?”

Listening to his words, Elena had an innocent smile like a child when their mischief succeeded.

“Did you see them already?”

A surprised expression appeared on Garhart's face.

“No, I just saw them from afar a while ago.”

“A while ago is it?”

Perhaps, she saw them from afar when Grahart met with Ryouma and escorted him to the capital.

“I do want to talk to that child before the audience this afternoon but...”

“Well, there's no other choice. Even his majesty has some great expectations for the reinforcements from Rozeria... And if we let Mikoshiba-dono and Elena-sama meet first, we don't know what kind of movements those peace-seeking groups are going to make.” *<TLN: You see in a war, not everyone in a country supports the war, some want peace even at the cost of capitulation.>*

The situation Zalda was in was indeed bleak.

Since a year ago, they had fought against the Ortomea Empire invasion. The national

land was exhausted and the mood of desperation had started to spread even among the soldiers.

Rural fields close to the frontlines were burned away, men in their prime were drafted as soldiers, and the remaining women and children could only move toward the neighboring urban areas.

Furthermore, the number of people who couldn't receive sufficient protection from their lords and sold themselves as slaves had increased.

The Zalda Kingdom national strength had begun to decline drastically.

That was why, this was the last chance for the Zalda Kingdom.

Now, with Rozeria and Mist Kingdom support, they had the chance to fight a decisive battle in a single strike.

Of course, this was a gamble with the existence of a country as the piece, but this was a gamble that needed to be done.

At least the men who wanted the survival of the Zalda Kingdom thought so.

"Grahart... I understand your feelings, but you should not deny those people who seek peace, try to understand them alright?"

Sensing Grahart who spoke with emotion when he mentioned the peace-seeking group, Elena spoke to him with a tone that was like a mother scolding her child.

"But still!"

"Listen alright? Those peace-seeking groups are not traitors. They just have their own way of thinking and try to make the best choice for this country and his majesty Julianus. Even though they choose a different way compared to the knights, what both of you are looking for is the same thing, no?"

(Well, that is if they don't have any ill-will of course...)

Such words crossed her mind, and Elena showed a bitter smile.

After all, she knew that goodwill was the most dangerous poison a country could eat.

Nevertheless, Grahart might seek his own justice if she did not try to put his mind back Unification of intention by force.

It was not the best method nor correct choice, but that was the last resort after all other possibilities were exhausted.

“Of course... For the survival of Zalda Kingdom.”

Grahart who was unable to understand Elena's mind answered her with shaking voice.

“Some might choose the Zalda Kingdom to become part of the Ortomea Empire, as long as the Royal Family of Zalda survived... Of course, the loss would be great but it is better than losing everything. Isn't it natural some people would think such a thing?”

“...Does Elena-sama also think like that?”

For him, Elena's words sounded like prophecy, and he heard something he did not want to hear, thus his expression was distorted in anguish.

“Do you think I came all the way here leading an army with such a thought in my mind?”

The moment she said those words, the atmosphere inside the room froze.

Her expression, nothing had changed.

She just sat there smiling gently.

However, Grahart body trembled in fear.

“I have said some foolish words... I'm very sorry.”

She could not stay silent if the Zalda Kingdom was going to be absorbed by the Empire.

If she did not think of at least that much, Elena Steiner wouldn't be here as a reinforcement.

Although her expression did not change, her words had pressure enough to beat Grahart down.

“Well, I'm just a retired old lady after all. I can understand why you feel uneasy like that.”

“Were you listening to what I said?”

It was the verbal abuse he had said to see Ryouma's true ability, Grahart never thought that the words he had said to Ryouma would've reached Elena's ears.

The air turned awkward just like when co-workers talked bad about their boss in a restroom and it turned out their boss was also inside the restroom.

“Indeed, even though I'm old, my eyes and ears are still good you know?”

“Please, don't joke like that...”

The eyes and ears Elena mentioned were possibly not about her physical condition.

It was impossible for Elena to be in that place.

Which meant, she had information sources within the Zalda Kingdom.

(Such a terrifying woman...)

Many people called Elena Steiner as the [Rozeria White Goddess of War], but her real ability was not about martial arts or strategies on the battlefield.

No one knows how she did it, but she had the power to gather various information on the continent as if it was in the back of her hand.

From such diverse information, she was capable of assembling her own hypothesis.

Being able to tell the flow of a conflict, surely she was akin to a goddess of war on the battlefield.

Grahart averted his gaze from Elena in shame, and he said...

“Right, what I said was just a joke...”

Hearing those words, Elena laughed while holding her mouth, she thought of Grahart's attitude as something very funny.

“You have a bad taste...”

“If you are surprised with this much then you won't be able to control the reins of that child you know?”

“That much is it?”

Grahart asked Elena while narrowed his eyes.

He was not insensitive enough to not realize who 'that child' meant.

“Indeed, let me say this, he is like the wildest horse I've ever seen.”

“Wild horse is it?”

“Although with a head that is more like a snake or scorpion.”

For someone who gave a review, Grahart felt her words were a great contradiction.

A wild horse.

Certainly, he understood that meaning.

That meant Mikoshiba Ryouma physical strength was spectacular.

Looking at his calm and good looking expression, Grahart could easily imagine he might change on the battlefield just like Elena.

But, Grahart was unable to imagine Ryouma as a snake or a scorpion from the attitude and expression he had when they met.

“Grahart, do not underestimate that child. If you don't want to get eaten that is...”

“I wonder, are you trying to criticize him or praise him?”



Elena's words sounded more like she was talking about an enemy general or some domestic political opponent.

However, toward Grahart's question Elena only shook her head in silence.

"Don't get me wrong, Grahart. I trust that child, and that child also believes in me. However, Grahart, for that child you all are neither his enemy or friend yet. That is why do ask and seek help properly... Before he thinks of you as an enemy and you get yourself robbed completely."

"If that person really does have such power... Certainly, at that time I will..."

Silence dominated the room.

"That's fine, sooner or later, this country and you will understand..."

Elena smiled gently.

Thinking about the figure of that young poisonous snake and when he would show its fangs...

# Chapter 14

## Proof of Power 3

*Afternoon, 3rd Day, 1st Month, the Year 2814.*

Tense air dominated the audience room.

A red carpet spread from the door toward the throne and guards standing by on the sides without moving an inch.

On the left and right side of the throne were military officers and civil servants.

Many of the civil servants were aristocrats with high ranks.

They wore silk with gold ink and plenty of silver thread as if symbolizing their power, large jewels that were on their bodies shining brilliantly.

Still, maybe because of the noble blood in them, their appearance suited them well and didn't felt vulgar.

And even though their country was in crisis, they still did their utmost to keep their appearances.

The same could also be said for the military officers.

Sure, they wore armor and carried a sword around their waist.

However, because of the elaborate designs made by skilled craftsmen, it made it feel like an art piece rather than a weapon.

(Well, their appearance would affect the morale of the soldiers if they appeared too shabby after all... But, again, am I going to have an argument with these guys too?)

While acknowledging the degree of their dressing, Ryouma sighs in his mind.

Based on his experience after he was summoned to this world, the incompetents aside, those who wore luxurious clothes and had high positions were always a bad match for

Ryouma.

“Please, come closer.”

Whispered by the servant who was waiting on his side, Ryouma slowly began to move toward the throne.

(These guys again...)

During the audience, there were knights and aristocrats standing in line.

They showed various emotions on their face.

Joy, Expectation, Disappointment, Amazement, Ridicule.

Roughly, these were the most common expressions amongst those people.

In percentage, the expression of ridicule and disappointment were three times more in comparison to those who showed joy and expectation.

(They feel disappointment because they really expected reinforcements yet the one who came was a young unnamed man huh?)

Self-ridicule appeared inside Ryouma's mind.

However, on the other hand, he also read the various informations he saw during the audience.

(The numbers are... more than I thought. The difference with back then, was that when it came to Lupis, it was about someone inheriting the throne and a guy with 30 years of experience in protecting the throne.)

Although there were some similarities, the fact that people were here meant Julianus still had influence.

If he was an immature monarch like Lupis, the nobles would run away to protect themselves.

In fact that was what had happened with Lupis back then, in the beginning, no nobles

gathered around Lupis.

Many of the knights still followed her because they got their living salaries from her, whereas the nobility was a group with a strong sense of independence, possessing their own territory.

Therefore, even though they would maintain the centralization with the King at the top during the peacetimes, once the situation turned south, and they doubted the king's ability to govern, they would run to protect themselves immediately.

Given that possibility, the Zalda Kingdom Ryouma saw right now still had some promise.

Of course, there would still be traitors, but in this situation, those people would lie in waiting and see how things evolved, which meant they still had an expectation that the Zalda Kingdom would survive.

Albeit small, they still had the wish for the kingdom to survive.

Because of those feelings, the noblemen were unable to leave the royal palace.

But the moment they felt that there was no hope for the kingdom to survive, they would then run away to save themselves without minding the surrounding eyes.

(To call this as the last opportunity for us to help is indeed right... Was the one who predicted this Lupis, or Meltina? No, ironically there is the possibility that Earl Bergston might have been the one.)

Although he was still unable to fully grasp the situation in his own country, he was able to grasp the neighboring country's situation.

Ryouma suppressed his laughter from such a contradiction.

Meanwhile, Ryouma proceeded to the throne when he realized some cold emotions were directed to him.

(This is... rather than anger, this is more like a murderous intent...)

In order to find out who directed such a gaze, Ryouma turned his face to the direction where he felt the gaze from.

(Those guys huh... Somehow, I also hate them after seeing them)

On the corner near the throne, the owners of such gaze gathered.

It was the first time Ryouma met all of them

And from their gaze, he could feel not just a scorn or ridicule, but a darker and clear emotion.

If one were to say it, that emotion was the one called hostility.

They wore gorgeous clothes just like the others.

Ryouma could tell from their dressing, that they had a high position.

Thinking about their position, they must be considerably powerful.

Although in reality, the status and power among them might not necessarily be equal.

Some might be dukes but without power, while there might be a baron with power close to that of a king's second-in-command.

However, the group that turned their hostility toward Ryouma seemed to have both status and power.

(Che!... This will be troublesome. Why won't everything just go smoothly...)

Looking at the current situation and the one during the Rozeria civil war, Mikoshiba Ryouma seemed to have been destined to oppose those with power.

(But still, that Gorilla is not there... If I'm not wrong, his name was Grahart...)

Ryouma searched for Grahart's appearance while swallowing his bad luck.

It was his position that concerned Ryouma the most right now.

Grahart's standing position during the audience should clearly show his position in this situation.

Ryouma could not find Grahart's presence amongst the knights that were lined up.

But when Ryouma directed his gaze toward the throne, he could see Grahart standing

right at the left side of the throne.

And despite standing by the King, he still wore armor in addition to carrying a sword around his waist.

(Heee..... That old man, he seems to have the king's trust.)

Grahart's large build felt like a shield protecting the throne and the King.

(If he is the close aide of the king, then... His attitude during the first time we met, the possibility of that being suggested by another person is high... But the problem is who? Although I cannot rule out the other possibility, the most suspicious one is Elena-san huh?)

The closer one stands to the throne, the stronger their voice to the king and higher in status they become.

However, the story would be different if one were to stand right next to the throne.

To get that, one needed not only status and ability.

It was necessary for the king to trust such person.

The Royal Guards and the Chivalric Orders are the shields and swords of the King.

But even so, if the King let one of them stand next to the throne while holding a sword, that meant the King trusted that person very much.

In case of Queen Lupis, such positions were held by Meltina and Mikhail.

And to send such a high standing man to welcome Ryouma.

It was doubtful that King Julianus the First, knew about Mikoshiba Ryouma in detail.

If there was such a minute intelligence network, then the Zalda Kingdom wouldn't have fallen into this kind of crisis.

Which meant, someone had informed the king.

Naturally, there was some kind of goal as well.

(But still, even if it was Elena-san's idea, to have the magnanimity to accept such

suggestion is a different matter... Julianus the first huh? I hope I won't rub him the wrong way...)

Ryouma kneeled in front of the throne while thinking of such a thing.

He waited for the king to appear, while also thinking about a rumor that the king was someone mediocre.



“You've come a long way... It must have been hard.”

A gentle voice came from above Ryouma's head who was kneeling in front of the throne.

“Ha!”

“I see, you don't have to be that respectful to me. Please show me the face of Rozeria's proud young hero. Besides you're not a nobleman of Zalda. It would be good if you try to relax a little bit you know?”

In response to such words, Ryouma raised his head, and he saw the figure of an old man with an abundant white beard sitting on the throne.

He wore a red silk cloak and a crown featuring a brilliantly big shiny diamond on top of his head which proved the status of the old man.

He had a gentle face with deep wrinkles.

From his gaze wisdom and intelligence could be felt.

His body was not that of a big build.

Because of the way he sat on the throne, Ryouma could not find out the exact measurements. However, he was sure that the King had a medium size body.

But even with that, the atmosphere around the old man was definitely the dignity of a ruler.

It was the atmosphere of a ruler who had certain number of achievements and had survived after decades of ruling the country.

He had an unique pressure coming from his body.

(This is bad... I heard the rumors that he was a mediocre king... But it seems I cannot rely on those rumors...)

Certainly, noticeable achievements could not be seen during the reign of Julianus the First.

His evaluation was normal, or at least he didn't have a failing grade.

However, by maintaining power during the war, that itself was a proof that he was no mediocre king.

“Umu, I heard the story from Elena but... I see...”

Julianus the First smiled gently toward Ryouma.

(So I was right, it was Elena-san...)

From the king, Ryouma finally found the answer.

As he had expected, Elena must have established a close relationship with the king of Zalda Kingdom.

“Currently, my country is being threatened by Ortomea Empire, and is driven into a corner.”

In response to the king's words, Ryouma nodded his head lightly.

“However, now that the reinforcements from the Mist and Rozeria Kingdoms have arrived, I thought that the opportunity to recapture our lands had arrived, but, what is your opinion?”

Ryouma waved his head quietly as if trying to deny Julianus words.

Certainly, now that the reinforcements from the Mist and Rozeria Kingdoms had arrived, such opportunity seemed to have arisen.

And indeed many people present in the room during the audience were waiting for

such decisive battle.

“Hoo... So do you think this is not a good opportunity?”

“I cannot say if this is a good opportunity or not. First I need to examine the information gathered so far, after grasping the situation, I would like to give your majesty a proper response.”

A stir was raised among the nobles, and the hostility directed toward Ryouma had increased sharply.

Was it because of simple antipathy, or were there any other reasons...

The people inside the audience room could only gulp down their saliva looking at Ryouma who expressed his opinion magnificently to the King's question.

“Heeh... Such a cautious man aren't you?”

Julianus' eyes shone slightly while looking at Ryouma.

Those sharp eyes usually belonged to a ruler that was trying to read his opponent.

After a moment, the stir ended, and silence dominated the room once again.

(His eyes are very firm without any fluctuation...)

Julianus could feel a strong will emanating from Ryouma's eyes.

He felt that the man in front of him was a man with an iron-clad willpower.

(What kind of life would make a young man such as him possess such eyes, I wonder...)

Julianus knew only of two people that had the same eyes as the young man in front of him.

One was the guardian of the Kingdom of Zalda, the deceased General Belharres.

And the other one was Elena Steiner, Rozeria's White Goddess of War.

It was the eyes of people who had an absolute confidence in oneself.



“Very well... I would like for you to lend me your power together with Elena-dono.”

The sharp gaze from his eyes disappeared, and Julianus returned to the gentle expression he had a while ago.

“I'll do my best and bring victory to the Zalda Kingdom.”

Ryouma lowered his head slowly and promised victory to the king.

“Umu, I have a great expectation...”

“Please wait!”

When Julianus felt satisfied with Ryouma reply, one man shook off the guards, moved forward, and stood before the king's throne.

# Chapter 15

## Proof of Power 4

*Afternoon, 3rd Day, 1st Month, the Year 2814. Western Continent Calendar.*

“Do you need something? Earl Schwarzheim”

Julianus the First looked at the person kneeling in front of him with a somewhat happy expression while resting his chin on one hand.

It was a man named Earl Schwarzheim, he wore silk clothes made by using an abundant amount of gold thread, and looking at the amount of jewelry he had on his body, he must have been a very influential person within the royal court.

Furthermore, the King still let him spoke even though he was pushing the guard and forcefully moved forward in front of the king which also showed how much power he had.

He was a man around his forties, with smooth blonde hair, and a protruding stomach.

However, from the way he was standing and his arms, he did not seemed like an ordinary powerful man.

“With all due respect your majesty, I need to inform your majesty of something, even if this will cause your majesty displeasure.”

While lowering his head, the man glared at Ryouma with a sharp look.

Hatred, anger, envy, contempt.

There were too many emotions coming from the man's gaze.

(Woah woah, what the hell is going on with this man...)

Anyone would feel perplexed if someone who they didn't know and meet for the first time suddenly glared at you with such gaze.

Ryouma tried his best to suppress the unrest within his heart due to the sudden development. Since he didn't want to show his possible enemy a weakness.

Of course, there was also a plan that deliberately made him being seen weak to reduce hostile enemies, but right now what Ryouma needed to do the most was to impress the Zalda Kingdom's aristocrats.

To that end, he needed to perform extreme caution.

“If you want to say something to me, say it.”

“This retainer think this Mikoshiba person doesn't have the power to fulfill your highness expectations. I think we should just send him back to his country.”

Due to the man's provocative attitude, commotion resounded within the audience room.

“Hou, so the Earl wants me to sent Mikoshiba-dono who have come all the way here as reinforcement back to his home country, am I right?”

“Yes.”

Toward Julianus the First's question, Earl Schwarzheim nodded his head without showing any feeling.

“Does the Earl understand what you're asking me to do? Does the Earl wants to create a crack between Rozeria and our kingdom?”

“Indeed, that might be true, but your majesty only said that because your majesty has not seen the army this person lead.”

The audience room grew silent the moment Earl Schwarzheim said those words.

“Elena-dono said that they have sent their best personnel as reinforcements, don't you know that?”

“If your majesty thinks everything was alright because of General Elena Steiner then your majesty is wrong. We have confirmed, but the army he leads is only around 300 soldiers. Not only that, the majority of them are women, which have no use on the battlefield. If your majesty sent his army to the battlefield so poorly prepared, and his

troops end up becoming the enemy's prey, the morale of our soldiers would fall, and I think it would bring unnecessary unrest to the whole army. Not to mention, after nearly one year of conducting a defensive war, we have no spare supplies. As we cannot use his troops as a war potential, I think it would be better for us to sent his army back to his home country.”

During the time Earl Schwarzheim talked, his voice was the only one reverberating inside this room.

The reinforcement from the Rozeria Kingdom comprised of 2,500 people led by Elena and 300 people led by Ryouma.

Although the reinforcement was being led by the infamous Elena Steiner, it was also a well-known fact that the reinforcement from the Rozeria Kingdom was too small compared to the reinforcement the Mist Kingdom had sent which amounted to 10,000 men.

It was very rude to the person who had came all the way as a reinforcement, but the Earl's opinion itself was not completely wrong.

A weak ally was much more annoying than a strong enemy.

In a war, breaking the opponent's heart was the most important.

Certainly, it was true that war ended with the enemy's commander dead, but sometimes the battlefield could only end when the last enemy soldier died.

And the reason why most of the time war ended when the Generals were killed, it was because the soldier's heart broke first due to the reality that their Commander-in-Chief had been killed.

Many victories and defeats arrived the moment the soldiers and the General who led the army became aware of the impending defeat.

(Hee... He does understand well when it comes to soldiers' morale. This guy, he doesn't seem that incompetent...)

Reasonable and logical thinking.

That was Ryouma impression after he paid attention to Earl Schwarzheim's speech.

His attitude was arrogant and he looked like a stupid noble, but this also confirmed once again that one should never judge a book by its cover.

While such prejudice faded away, Ryouma came to understand Earl Schwarzheim's true motive.

(There are two possibilities. Is he being serious or is he trying to induce something... If he was being serious then he is a reliable person. But if he was actually trying to induce something then, he's an enemy.)

Ryouma stared at the Earl as if he was trying to read the Earl's mind...

In a sense, the Earl's concern made sense.

Looking only at the surface, the army Ryouma had led was only around 300 men, it was too small.

Not only that, his army was filled with young people, it was also mostly women.

Since military organizations in this world were mostly filled with healthy men, Earl Schwarzheim's words actually made sense.

It was rare for a country to conscript the common people and send them as a reinforcement, and they also understood the situation within the Rozeria Kingdom.

Currently, the Rozeria Kingdom people was doing its best to rebuild the country after a civil war, which also made them unable to send reinforcements to the neighboring country.

That was why they appreciated that even with such condition the Rozeria Kingdom still sent them 2,500 soldiers led by Elena.

However, the army led by Mikoshiba Ryouma was different.

Not only the composition of his army, they also thought that the soldiers were being led by an inexperienced upstart nobleman.

'You sent us this kind of reinforcement! Are you making fun of our country?'

That was the anger inside the Earl's mind.

From the Earl's point of view, Ryouma's soldiers looked like conscripted commoners that were being made to look like proper soldiers.

“That is why, thank you for coming this far, but, we cannot afford to babysit you. I do not know what is your purpose for bringing such soldiers but, speaking frankly just by being here you're already an annoyance, although the soldiers you have brought are only around 300, we still cannot provide you any supplies or weaponry that are important to our people!”

Such roar echoed within the audience room.

Certainly it was hard for any nation to share valuable supplies during warfare.

“Earl Schwarzheim, don't you think your words are a bit too much?”

“What are you saying, General Henschel. In fact what are you thinking? I heard you picked him up before he entered the royal capital, yet you didn't inform his Majesty about this in advance. You should have sent him away before presenting him with an audience like this!”

It was a sound argument with no room for defense.

What Zalda Kingdom wanted was a reinforcement not an additional burden.

Such opinion within the audience room made Grahart unable to provide any assistance.

For the other nobles, the Earl looked like someone who was thinking of the best interest for the Zalda Kingdom.

The neighboring countries might think Julianus the First as a mediocre ruler, but for Earl Schwarzheim, he was a man worthy of service.

(His Majesty is not a mediocre king. He is someone who is able to manage the country throughout many wars!)

Such thought emerged inside the Earl's mind.

“Fumu, I can understand the Earl's concern... But I have no intention of sending Mikoshiba-dono back.”

Julianus smiled while stroking his white beard.

Then an uproar happened inside the audience room once again.

“Why? What is your majesty reason to decide that?!”

With such unexpected words from his king, the Earl could not contain his surprise and tried to approach the throne.

“You're being rude toward his majesty!”

Grahart immediately restrained the Earl.

“Damn it! Let me go! Your majesty, why?!”

His face dyed red, and the Earl also tried to shake off Grahart's hands.

“Henschel. Let him be...”

After Julianus said those words calmly, Earl Schwarzheim immediately realized his own action.

His action could be seen as an act of rebellion for trying to forcefully step too close like that.

“P-Please forgive me for my rude behavior, your majesty...”

The Earl's immediately lowered his head begging for forgiveness, and Julianus only lightly waved his hand and asked him to raise his head.

“It is fine... I can understand the Earl's concern...”

After he said that, he turned his eyes toward Ryouma who up until this time kept kneeling quietly in silent.

“How about this? Everyone in this room might have the same concerns as the Earl.

Although it might be troublesome, how about showing your power to everyone?"

"Does that mean in a battle?"

"That is right. Or are you going to say that the Earl's concerns were true?"

After he said those words, Julianus smirked provoking Ryouma.

(I see... It is a bit irritating that the situation ended up like this but... Since we will have to fight in the end. I guess I will have to move the plan forward a little...)

Originally Ryouma had come to defend the Rozeria Kingdom as a reinforcement.

Now that he had taken sovereign control of the Wortenia peninsula, what he needed now was fame.

It was no exaggeration to say that the reason he had come as a reinforcement was also to obtain that fame.

A small sacrifice needed to obtain a glorious reputation.

The more blood flowing, the more Mikoshiba Ryouma's name would spread across the continent.

"No, please let me prove the power of my soldiers in front of everyone."

Saying those words, Ryouma's face distorted.

He showed the smile of a beast who found its prey.

But no one was able to see his smile since Ryouma lowered his head when he did that.

# Chapter 16

## Proof of Power 5

*Evening, 3rd Day, 1st Month, the Year 2814.*

Bonfires were lit surrounding the training ground, many nobles and royal members came to a place that usually they never visited.

“All of them seems to have a lot of leeway, eh?”

“I guess it cannot be helped, rarely such spectacle like this happens during wartime after all. Besides, they are not the only ones. Even I also want to see the result of this match...”

Elena who sat beside Ryouma reproved him while looking at him with a gentle smile on her face.

They had spent time separately after the civil war ended, but even when they never met, their relationship did not got disturbed.

An easy going grandmother and her grandchild.

From the point of view of bystanders, they looked like that.

“Geez, Elena-san you said those words as if it was another person’s problem...”

“Of course... Since the purpose of this match is to confirm the ability of the soldiers you lead, meaning I have nothing to do with it, no?”

Ryouma smiled bitterly toward Elena and directed his gaze to another direction.

The thing that was about to happen after this, was a friendly battle between the Zalda Kingdom Royal Order and Mikoshiba Ryouma.

Usually, in this kind of friendly battle, a limitation such as not using a sharp weapon would be put in place, but after a strong suggestion from the opponent to make this

battle feel closer to an actual combat, such limitation had been removed.

In the end, they will use real swords and spears.

The dull light reflected by the blade made the atmosphere felt like the fight they were about to unfold was not a friendly battle.

“Well, since this is you that we're talking about, I'm confident of your winning prospect, but, don't let your guard down, understand? After all, your opponents are the soldiers the Zalda Kingdom is proud of... They might kill your soldiers you know?”

The smile disappeared from Elena's face when she said those words.

The expression on her face was tense.

It was as if she was about to enter the battlefield.

“Elena-san worries too much. Do you think I would lose?”

In respond to his question, Elena shook her head while sighing.

“Don't joke around like that you know? Of course, I know you... You were able to defeat Kyle who was one of the best knights of the Rozeria Kingdom. But, we don't know if those children would be able to do the same... It is not too late, some of the soldiers you have seem to be skilled mercenaries. You should replace those children with them... If the other side refuses to let you withdraw, I will do something about it.”

Toward Elena's concern and suggestion, Ryouma kept silent while showing a gentle smile.

Of course, since Elena was just a general from a reinforcement country, she could not dictate the situation.

No matter how much of a personal connection she had with the Zalda Kingdom's king, she had no power to make the Zalda Kingdom's nobles and military officers back down.

If she did a bad maneuver, the Rozeria Kingdom might end up being driven into a further crisis.

But even if she could not do anything much, she still wanted to confirm everything with Ryouma.

Elena's eyes then directed to a group of people standing behind the two of them.

The soldiers standing there were young.

Some of them have a figure that could perfectly be called as young children rather than a young person.

Not only boys, there were also girls.

Of course, when she looked at the weapon the children carried, they looked no less than the mercenaries, but it was different when fighting was involved

Elena had already seen many dead bodies of young children on the battlefields.

Those young children were commoners that end up being conscripted by the army.

Some of them were young knights who succeeded their family knight household at a young age.

But regardless of whom, the blessing of the death god would descend equally toward anyone in a battlefield.

A social position had no meaning in there.

And such reality was a hard truth in this world.

That was why Elena did not wish to see the dead body of a child other than in a battlefield.

(In the end, it was just for my own self-satisfaction... But still...)

That thought crossed Elena's mind.

Such thoughts were not related to the death of her daughter due to the power struggle in the past.

“Now then, In the presence of the Royalty, I present the match battle between, Rozeria Kingdom Baron Mikoshiba Ryouma-dono, and the Zalda Kingdom Royal Order commander, Oosan Gurido-dono. Both of you please step forward.”

When that voice reverberated within the training ground, the surrounding noise disappeared.

“Oh, I've been called... Now then, I guess I have to go...”

Ryouma lifted his lips and headed toward the referee.

The match was a group battle of five versus five.

This was also due to the strong suggestion made by Earl Schwarzheim who wanted to see the collective capability of the soldiers rather than their individual ability.

That Earl Schwarzheim seemed to hate Ryouma for some reason.

At first, Ryouma's opponent would be from the Royal Guard, but because Grahart did not inform anything to Julianus beforehand regarding Ryouma, the Earl strongly suggested that Ryouma should fight against people from the Royal Order instead.

*<TLN: Royal Guards are knights directly under the Ruler's command, while Royal Orders are Knight orders under the command of regional commander-in-chief/nobles>*

“It is fine... Ah, since this is a rare chance, how about betting with the others? Elena-san would be able to make some profit you know? Actually I also already made some bets... Oops, that should be confidential.”

While he whispered such words to Elena, Ryouma signaled the soldiers behind them to proceed to the middle of the training ground.

Apparently, Ryouma had engaged in an under-the-table gambling with the other nobles.

Although the Zalda Kingdom was in a crisis, some with a screw loose always existed.

But well, humans cannot sustain themselves without moderate rest as well, thus such entertainment was not fully wrong.

(My words alone won't sway your decision huh? But still...)

Looking at Ryouma's smile, she was able to convince herself that he would win.

However, for the person called Mikoshiba Ryouma to bet on himself, it was not because he was naive.

(I guess he has some plan huh...)

Mikoshiba Ryouma boasted a sharp mind.

And Elena was fully aware of how sharp his mind was.

Because even Elena herself was able to obtain the long-awaited revenge thanks to his help...

Now, Elena ended up with two contradictory feelings.

One was that she wanted to see the soldiers Mikoshiba Ryouma had raised.

The other one was the feeling of a mother who didn't want to see young children getting hurt.

Those two emotions were Elena's true feelings.

(But no matter what, I decide to believe in you... Ryouma-kun.)

Elena stared at Ryouma's back with a gaze full of expectation and sadness...



“Now then, are both sides ready?”

The one who asked such question toward Ryouma and Gurido was an old nobleman with gray hair that had been appointed as the referee.

The referee was a nobleman who also had his own history as a warrior.

But rather than the referee, he felt like a moderator just to make sure that the contest was honest.

Since once this match started, it would be impossible for an old man like him to stop a bunch of knights with full equipment fighting against each other.

Well, even if it was just a form, this seemed to be the wishes of the nobles who wanted to dilute the gruesome massacres even if it was just a little bit.

“Of course...”

Cold gazes rained down toward Ryouma.

A frustrated face could be seen on Gurido's face.

'Why do proud royal knights like us have to fight against children like this?!' Such a thought floated inside his mind.

Within the training ground, no one cared about who was the winner or the loser.

Since it was a fight where fully equipped knights were up against young boys and girls.

Although the children seemed to be wearing sturdy leather armors, their physique was too different.

Considering that, even in modern fighting sports they would also adopt classification by weight.

And despite that famous saying of 'willows are weak, yet they bind other woods', but in reality, the strongest usually crushed the weak.

Of course, it did not meant that Gurido knew such words, but it was similar no matter where.

That the winner was mostly always those who possess a stronger body built.

Inside Gurido's mind, it was impossible for the children to win even if they tried their best.

However, he did not have any intention of voicing his opinion.

Since Zalda Kingdom's king, Julianus the First would be watching the match.

No matter how frustrated he felt, he could not show his unwilling attitude in front of his king.

“Yes, we can do it anytime.”

Looking at Ryouma's calm smile, Gurido's eyebrows twitched.

“Very well then. Both sides... No matter what the result, none shall bear a grudge, is that clear?”

The referee urged Ryouma and Gurido to move forward.

Apparently, he wanted both of them to shake hands.

“Please take care of us...”

Ryouma extended his hand toward Gurido.

However, Gurido just snorted at Ryouma and left the place as it was.

“O-Oi. Gurido-dono, what are you trying to do here?”

Looking at Gurido's attitude, the old man referee raised his voice.

Whatever the reason was, his attitude was too disrespectful.

“Pardon me, but I have no intention of making a friend with someone that I'm going to fight... Let's do that later.”

Gurido answered with those words while walking away toward his men.

“This is troubling. I seem to end up being hated, again...”

Ryouma said those words while scratching his right cheek.

However, from how he spoke, Ryouma didn't seem to care even though he was being ignored.

“That guy... He's already being rude even before the match begins. Mikoshiba-dono, please do forgive his behavior.”

“Well, I can understand Gurido-san’s feelings. Besides, it must be troublesome to be appointed as our opponent so suddenly like this. Please don't think about it too much.”

Ryouma smiled gently at the old man after saying those words.

Inside his heart, he didn't even care about Gurido's attitude.

After all, for Mikoshiba Ryouma, he was just a prey.

“Now then, let the match begin... Please show your ability as much as possible.”

Ryouma muttered such words with a small voice...

# Chapter 17

## Proof of Power 6

Silence dominated the training ground.

Only his own faint breath entered Kevin's ears.

The training ground's space was around 100 meters. And nobles and military officers surrounded the place.

There was nothing such as spectator seats like the ancient Roman stadium had. There was only an open ground with stones surrounding it for the people to sit on it.

(This is huge... It would be disadvantageous if we face them head on.....)

Such thought appeared inside Kevin's mind while he looked at the figure of knights standing 50 meters away from him.

The battle to see through each other fighting potential had begun.

The infamous sentence from the book of the art of war 'Understand the enemy and yourself, and in a hundred battles you will never be in peril', it was never an exaggeration to call that sentence as true.

Since it was important for a person to make a proper preparation before heading toward a battle.

And such attitude was the first thing Ryouma and the others taught the children.

As usual, Kevin observed the five knights in front of him for information.

Apart from his height that was almost 170 cm, his body muscles were only half of the opposing knights.

From the viewpoint of simple muscular strength, the outcome was already obvious.

Even with a weapon in hand.

The knights had heavy steel armors covering their whole body, even their face. The weapons they held were 3 meters long spears.

On the other hand, Kevin and the others were only being protected by leather armors and wooden shields that had been reinforced with steel.

Of course, the leather armors made by using the monsters material they obtained from inside the peninsula was not inferior compared to the steel armor, but as a result of emphasizing on maneuverability, the overall defensive power was lower compared to the whole body steel armors.

It was a good choice if they thought that they were about to fight within the Zalda Kingdom which was famous for its mountainous land, but it was obviously disadvantageous to use such armor in a straightforward match.

Because of the tension, Kevin's lips felt dry.

His heart beated fast, and he felt chill on his skin.

Such feeling was known as fear.

It was a feeling that people usually felt and tried to suppress when they were about to fight.

After moistening his dry lips with his tongue, Kevin grasped his favorite iron sword while turning his eyes toward the comrades around him who also showed the same expressions as him.

(Everyone feels the same huh? I guess that is understandable. This is only our second time after all...)

Fear when facing an actual battle where people risked their life.

The fear that they might lose their own life and the fear of taking other people lives, such feelings invaded Kevin and the others' hearts.

It was the fear that he even felt when they performed the subjugation of the pirates, despite the mission also being for their revenge.

However, Kevin understood that he could change his fear into power if he didn't try to deny it.

Fear was not weakness, if one were able to understand the fear inside one's heart, such fear can become power.

Several months had passed since the time of the pirate subjugation.

Kevin also had survived the fights against monsters within the wortenia peninsula.

For him, the feeling of fear he was familiar with was a friend, and a weapon to survive.

(Don't think anything useless. We're the ones in a weaker position, if we hesitate, we will die...)

Although formally it was just a friendly match, the truth was this battle was a dangerous battle where the participants bet their lives.

The term of victory or defeat was decided when the opponents died, loses consciousness or the referee judged that the battle was over.

There was no point system or round system. There were only two choices in this match, getting knocked out or knocking out the enemy.

If one were to compare the knights and Kevin's strength in numerical value, the knights would be 100 while Kevin and the others would be around 70.

Kevin was definitely disadvantaged.

However, winning or losing was not being determined by strength alone.

(We just have to do the same as usual. Just like the instructors said, we just have to fight. To survive together with my comrades.)

Living on the wortenia peninsula had forged Kevin's and his comrades' body into a beast.

What Kevin needed to do was to use that body efficiently.

"Just like usual..."

Kevin muttered those words in a small voice, and the comrades around him nodded their head silently.

The fear he had and the urge to kill started to spread inside his heart.

The Prana inside of their body began to circulate extra power.

Along with that, their fighting spirit also began to increase...

“Start!”

The old man referee broke the silence.

“Leon and Rina you guys attack from the right. Annet and I will go from the left. Melissa! Look out for the timing!”

「始め！」

「馬鹿め、わざわざ分散するとは  
勝負を捨てたな」  
騎士の一人が馬鹿にした様に  
鼻を鳴らして呟いた。



After being recognized as soldiers, the children had been assigned into a five men unit.

Several months had passed since then. They had performed many strategies together and repeated it many times over.

The moment Kevin gave the signal, the four people charged from the right and left at full speed.

Although they moved fast, the speed they used was still in the category of human ability.

With four people charging from the left and right.

Melissa alone was standing in the center facing the knights.

“What's this? I guess they are just brats huh? Dispersing like this, are they trying to throw away the match?”

One man muttered those words while snorting his nose.

The Knights thought that even if they charged immediately, in the end, their opponents were still children.

Besides, they were all wearing leather armors.

From the start, the knights thought the winner and loser had already been decided.

Or at least, most of the knights thought like that.

With such situation, the knights thought the children will gather up in one place and performed a defensive battle.

“Oi, the leader said we should not go easy on them... Let's just go and finish this as fast as possible.”

Following the platoon leader's words, the other Knights nodded their head.

Since it was an order, they did not have to mind killing their opponents.

Although they never thought of murder as something fun.

(At least, I should not make all of you suffer...)

It might sound like a hypocrite, but that was all of the knights true feelings.

The knights grasped their spear while observing the children moving closer to them.

They have no intention of using the military magic arts.

However, such thought proved to be a mistake...

“Do it, Melissa!”

[Breath of the fierce wind spirit, now is the time to respond to my prayers, -]

The moment Kevin shouted, the distance between the four children and the knights which were around 20 meters was shortened in a blink of an eye.

And subsequently the Knights heard the small muttering from Melissa's lips.

“Wha?! Magic Arts?!”

“This is bad!”

Looking at Melissa’s behavior the knights immediately tried to activate their Prana, but looking at the speed Melissa chanted, they would not make it in time.

Realizing that, the knights simultaneously readied their shields.

Under normal circumstance, they would usually performed defense magic arts and fortified their shield, but because they looked down on their opponents too much, they didn't do that.

Nevertheless, even with body reinforcement alone, it should be enough to defend themselves.

That was of course if it was a normal one...

Melissa who finished the magic art chant raised her hands.

“[Wind Wave!]”

The moment Melissa swung her hand, at the next moment, a strong gale of wind raised above the ground.

It was a beginner magic art.

Which could not be said as to have a strong killing power, it was a technique that only caused a wave of strong wind.

Because it was easy to use, it also had low power.

The wave of wind was also only up to the extent of people wanting to say “ah the wind is strong today.”

The knights who also knew what magic art Melissa had used showed mocking smiles.

However, what they didn't realize was Melissa's other intention.

As the gale of wind hit the ground, it pushed forward toward the Knights. Rolling the dust and dry sand together with it.

Causing everything to become blurry...

“Damn it! My view!”



The Knights' field of view was getting considerably reduced due to the dry sand carried by the wind.

In the first place, the full-face helmets the knights wore were already causing their view to be limited.

And now with their view completely being disturbed, Kevin's and his comrades swords came attacking.

They abandoned their camouflage provided by the wind and by using the strengthening magic, they revealed their body.

“It can't be! These children as well, they can use magic arts!”

“These guys, just what are they?!”

Due to the panic of Kevin and his comrades closing in, the Knights began attacking using their spears.

However, the attack they performed didn't have the sharpness they usually had during practice.

For Kevin and the others who had experienced fighting against monsters, the opponent's attack speed was close to standing still.

Kevin avoided the protruded spear's head by tilting his body to the side slightly while also aiming his sword at the opponent's hand, especially the fingers that held the spear.

Although the knights wore full body iron armors, the joint part was relatively low in defense.

“Gaaah! Damn it! My fingers!”

Kevin's sword attack cut off his opponent fingers with high precision.

Usually, Knights won't be screaming unsightly like that, but due to all of the sudden development, the knight was caught off guard.

“What's going on here? I thought they were just mere children!”

Looking at his comrade's figure losing his fingers, one of the knights felt into confusion. Despite still in battle, he was letting himself defenseless.

And his enemy did not overlook such opening.

Kevin then delivered a strong blow to the knight's foot that was standing still in shock. Kevin aimed at the joint part of the armor once again, it was around the knight's knee.

When Kevin's sword struck his opponent, it felt like he was breaking a tree branch.

But that was not the end.

The moment the knight crouched down, Annet's sword came attacking.

It was a side sweep aimed at the Knight's neck.

Had Ryouma didn't tell them not to kill if it was possible beforehand. Annet's attack would've surely cut off the Knight's head.

However, Annet only used strength enough to cause the knight to fall unconscious.

The fallen knight fell into the ground as if he was a marionette whose strings had been cut off.



"I see, so that's why... Now I understand why that child showed me such confidence..."

A sigh of admiration leaked from Elena who was watching the match together with Julianus the First and Grahart.

Looking at the speed the battle had proceeded, it was clear that the quality of soldiers Mikoshiba Ryouma had brought was high.

"I can't believe it... Such young children using magic arts? Furthermore, such commoner children? Unbelievable..."

"Grahart, since this is reality, accept it as a fact. Or else people might question the status you have as the General of the Royal Guards."

Due to Elena sharp words, Grahart's face was dyed in red due to embarrassment.

After all, a person should never become a commander if they could not accept the

reality presented before their very own eyes.

“P-Pardon my rudeness. To show you this kind of unsightly appearance.”

Grahart immediately lowered his head.

“I see, if all of the soldiers he led have the same quality as those who are currently fighting, then indeed he has a lot of war potential.”

Julianus the First muttered such words while stroking his beard calmly.

“Your majesty... For all the 300 men? It can't be, right?”

Grahart shook his head feeling disbelief.

Of course, such disbelief was reasonable.

With how this world common sense worked, the war power Ryouma had was hard to maintain.

Grahart himself to be honest thought that Earl Schwarzhelm remarks were right.

Remembering where Ryouma had come from which was the Wortenia peninsula.

A territory where there was almost no tax revenue.

And without high tax revenue, it would have been hard to maintain this kind of army.

“We can't be sure that only those handful of people are capable of performing such prowess, no? Setting aside the method he had used to make commoners acquire magic arts, if he actually managed to teach the five of them then why not also do the same with the others as well. That is why, we can safely assume that the 300 men Mikoshiba-dono led are capable of performing magic arts, am I wrong? Of course, there's also the possibility he had chosen them on purpose to make us think like this as well...”

The gentle expression had already disappeared from Julianus' face, what was left was his sharp eyes that were looking at a new prey.

# Chapter 18

## Proof of Power 7

“it can't be... This is impossible...”

Ousan Gurido doubted what he had seen.

From the mouth of Gurido, a warrior who had survived many battlefields, a small mutter filled with disbelief could be heard.

Before he had realized it, Gurido's palms had become sweaty.

Having protected the Kingdom from the invasion of Ortomea Empire for many years, the Royal Order were composed of the best knights in the Kingdom.

Among them, this time he had specially chosen people with guaranteed ability.

Of course, because he thought that the reinforcements were a low-grade army he didn't choose the best men among the Royal Order. but still, those chosen men were people with good quality skills and experience.

It could even be said with confidence that they were above-average knights.

Yet, those strong knights failed against young children.

“I can't believe it... To think such commoners' born children were able to use magic arts...”

The surrounding nodded in agreement to one of his aide's remarks.

Certainly, those words were reasonable.

It was true that anybody could master magic arts if they trained, but normally commoners won't even have the opportunity to learn it.

As generally known, there were two ways to learn magic arts.

One was by taking many lives and waiting for the Prana absorbed by the bodies to mature naturally, and the other one was by the method of being mentored by a teacher

who had already acquired magic arts skills.

But in reality, it was hard to find a teacher willing to do that.

The biggest problem was the cost of hiring such teacher.

But there was also another problem, as most people know, magic arts were a powerful weapon, which could be turned into a shield, but also could be used as medicine as well, and for most people it was a symbol of status.

Although not all people who learned magic arts were aristocrats, it was essential for most aristocrats to acquire magic skills.

All of that came down to the sense of elitism, where it was said that those who learn magic arts were chosen by the Gods, thus magic arts could not be taught easily to others.

Actually being chosen by the Gods aside, it was the truth that those who had learned magic arts wouldn't have much trouble in life.

During wartime, for meritorious services in war, some nobles could even enter the Royal family, and it was not a mere dream for knights or commoners to become a noble if they could use magic arts. Other than government positions, those who could use magic arts also have a sufficiently rich life as mercenaries or adventurers.

Magic arts were a convenient and easy-to-use technology in this world.

It was a technology that could drastically affect the life of human beings. That was the easiest way to express it in words.

Which brought us to, if hypothetically a commoner could find a teacher to teach him or her, usually, they would be met with the first problem, that was that they would've been made to pay an astronomical amount of money.

That was why, normally in order for a commoner to acquire magic arts, he or she must continue fighting as adventurers or mercenaries and absorb their victims Prana, and wait for the day when the accumulated Prana inside their body awakened.

However, unlike his subordinates who felt surprised due to the sudden development, Gurido also realized the threat Kevin and the others possessed.

(Unbelievable... They can use magic arts at that age... Furthermore, the way they collaborate, such action can only be done after a considerable amount of training and actual battle experience...)

Because magic arts were powerful techniques, its handling was also extremely difficult.

Although it was not unusual to see a Knight who trusted their magic arts too much ending up dead against another knight.

There was also the difference in Prana one possessed between each individual.

Just like a car consuming gasoline, magic arts consume Prana, without Prana it was impossible to use magic arts.

And if no magic arts were involved, a Knight was only slightly stronger than a commoner, that was why, no matter how matchless a knight was, he or she would not be able to survive if they were being thrown into the battlefield alone.

Nevertheless, those who possess magic skills were always perceived as someone individually strong.

However, currently, Kevin and the others used magic arts skillfully while also defending each other as a team, they shaved the Zalda Kingdom's knights power bit by bit, and were aiming for an opportunity to end the match.

(This is bad... We will end up being pushed by the difference in number... We should end the fight here...)

Gurido's hands trembled after he realized the disadvantages his soldiers were in.

Zalda Kingdom's knights were superior in term of skills and ability.

However, the match had already ended when the surprise preemptive attack succeeded, causing one of the knights to end up losing his fingers, and another one to fall unconscious.

With the success of Kevin and the others achieved through collaboration, they managed to overturn the battlefield.

(However... If we ended it here, that means we have to forfeit to such children.)

From the point of view of Gurido, Annet who didn't cut off the knight's neck meant that Kevin and the others have no intention of killing the knights.

However, on the other hand, looking at the way they cut one of the knight's fingers meant they have no hesitation of injuring them.

(As long as nobody dies, huh? Fuck, I see. You're making fun of us)

Now that the conclusion could be seen, if he followed his logic, he should have asked the match to end.

However, Gurido who understood the cost of losing this match could not agree to end the match, even though he understood the situation his men were in.

“Your Majesty...”

Gurido then directed his line of sight toward the only man who could end this match.

“Melissa! A bold move is not necessary. Listen, Support us and Annet. And chip off the opponents fighting strength!”

Kevin gave his instructions rapidly while also dealing with the knight in front of him with his sword.

In the first preemptive attack, Kevin and Annet managed to take down two of the knights, while the other two kept the other three busy.

Now the remaining knights were moving in formation while protecting the unconscious knight.

The feeling of mocking Kevin and the others for being children had disappeared from within their hearts.

While the knights were fighting while relying on their steel armors and trying to find a way to escape their predicament, Kevin and the others delivered light blows repeatedly to keep the Knights in check.

“Platoon leader. If we stay like this, we won't be able to hold out. We should push them

here and settled it with one direct blow.”

In response to his subordinates who were currently defending against Kevin's consecutive attacks, the platoon leader remained silent. He himself thought the same thing.

(Just like he said, we can only finish this match with one decisive action...)

Although the power of Kevin and the others attack was light, if the consecutive pressure continue to happen, it was clear that the knights would reach their limit.

Which left two options to take.

Continue fighting or just admit that they had lost and surrender, abandoning their pride in the process.

Because this was not a battlefield, even if they surrendered in this battle the people would still recognize them.

However, although it was against their will, this was also a battle where all the participants bet their lives.

Some people might think that they were trying to deny their shortcomings and use the match as an excuse to escape death.

If that happens they would end up miserable.

And even if other people might not care about such things, the knights knew that everything would be over if they surrendered.

Furthermore, if they choose to surrender here, their pride as knights of the Zalda Kingdom would fall to the ground, which would make them a subject of ridicule among their own peers.

“Let's do it!”

In response to the platoon leader, the knight who was facing against Leon nodded his head. Nobody could see what kind of face the knights had but they were probably smiling just like a warrior who was prepared to fight to the death.

(Sorry everyone... Although it feels like we get the short end of the stick, and we might be unable to win, we cannot lose here either...)

There was no honor in a victory where somebody lost their lives during the match.

The feeling of remorse and self-responsibility for involving his subordinates in this useless match appeared inside of the platoon leader's heart.

Still, he could not dishonor the Zalda Kingdom's reputation.

They must keep the pride of the knights, even if that meant losing their own life, because if they did not do that, the morale of the knights would fall and the Ortomea Empire would be able to have their way.

As the knights resolved themselves, Grahart suddenly pulled out his sword and broke in between them.

And at the same time, Julianus the First's words resonated.

“That's it! Enough!”

Following that words, the surrounding cheers completely disappeared, and silence dominated the field.

Grahart who stood in between the Knights and Kevin, acted as a wall preventing them from continuing the fight.

Looking at the King's chair, he was standing, overlooking the place.

And people's gaze naturally were looking at him.

“Y-Your majesty. Wh-What has happened? The fight is not yet over.”

The referee old man spoke in a fluster.

“No, that is enough. If we continue the fight any further, casualties will appear. Then because of it, a big lump of grudge would remain inside the hearts of both sides. Mikoshiba-dono soldiers have already proved to us that they are equal to our knights. Isn't that enough?”

Considering the matter why this fight had happened, Julianus the First's judgment was right.

Because there was no reason to fight in a life and death battle against the soldiers that had come as reinforcement.

However, the surrounding reaction of the aristocrats and nobles was quite different.

Some people nodded in agreement, others were feeling ashamed that their knights ended up losing against children.

Meanwhile, the one who showed the most dissatisfaction with the result was the referee old man.

“Your majesty! If we leave it like this, I'm concerned that the pride of the Zalda Kingdom's knight would fall. Am I right? Gurido-dono?”

The old man turned his gaze to Gurido.

Looking at the old man referee's behavior who most definitely was not neutral, Ryouma shrugged his shoulders in response.

“No, I believe nothing good would come if we continue the match.”

“What?! You bastard! Is that the attitude the leader of the royal order should have?! Be ashamed!”

Gurido's shoulders trembled in response to the old man's accusation.

Although he himself felt unsatisfied, soon enough they would have to fight decisive battles where the country's fate would be decided, thus he could not let his subordinates die in a meaningless match.

“I said enough. This is an order from the King. The match is a draw. There's neither a winner nor a loser. I want everyone to consent to this... Is Mikoshiba-dono also fine with this?”

Following Julianus' words, the surroundings directed their gaze at Ryouma.

“Of course. It was an honor for us who are less skilled to be presented an opportunity to practice with everyone from the Zalda’s Knight Order. We just hope that our power could help Your Majesty and everyone else.”

In respond to Julianus question, Ryouma answered gracefully while bending on one knee.

“Very well. No one would think of your troops as a hindrance if they saw the match a moment ago. From now on, I request you to help this country... Is everyone alright with this?”

Julianus then directed his sharp gaze toward the surroundings.

Because the king had asserted that much, nobody could protest against him.

Despite all the hidden complaints inside their hearts, the surrounding people were silent.

(Now then, the development here is as expected... Well, I do feel bad if Elena is indeed betting on our victory, please do forgive me about that...)

Ryouma himself had put his own bet and urged Elena to do the same in order to appeal to the surroundings that the match was serious, but in fact, he had aimed for a draw from the beginning.

At least, Ryouma didn't have any intention of killing his opponent to win the match.

(But still, that old man is indeed a big deal... they said that he was a mediocre king, but this proves once again he is not... I guess I can't trust rumors about him now)

In the initial plan, Ryouma had the intention of making a suggestion to the King, but Julianus had made the decision before Ryouma told him so. Which meant, Julianus at least understood what would happen if the Zalda knights lost this match.

And he forcefully declared the match to end as a draw. Which made Ryouma think that rather than a mediocre king, Julianus looked like a big sly raccoon.

He continued to hide his fangs from the surrounding countries and made the neighboring countries think that he was a mediocre one.

(Well, I guess Lupis would not stand a chance against him... Also, it seems that that old man noticed it.)

That there was a poisonous needle inside his own country.

While kneeling on one knee, Ryouma stole a glance at a certain direction.

He was looking at the elderly nobleman who served as the referee of the match.

It was unknown whether it was because he felt responsible as referee of the match, but it was definitely unusual for someone to protest against the king directly.

However, his behavior indicated two possibilities.

(That guy... I wonder, which one is the reason he protested against the King?)

Was his behavior because he loved his country, or because he harbored ill will toward it...

Ryouma lifted his lips to form a smile.



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